

UGO

The uk.games.video.misc Magazine

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GUNS, POWER UP!

The history of the lightgun

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TOP REVIEWS

Bloodrayne, P.N.03, Conker's, Fear Effect 2...

grand theft auto *Vice city*

Violence Special!

Issue 06

ugvm

Well, in Amsterdam, you can buy beer in a movie theatre. And I don't mean in a paper cup either. They give you a glass of beer, like in a bar. In Paris, you can buy beer at MacDonald's. Also, you know what they call a Quarter Pounder with Cheese in Paris?

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Issue 06

Welcome



Finally, **ugvm** is back again - all guns blazing! (I can't believe you just said that! **Tim**) This issue is our **Violence Special** - a whole magazine dedicated to games involving guns, bombs, blood, corpses, shooting, fighting, killing, maiming and kittens.

Except the kittens. Unless they have guns.

Our cover review is **Grand Theft Auto: Vice City** - the latest and most violent of the GTA series. All your other violent desires are covered too, with games such as Bloodrayne, Bangai-O and WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth. **ugv.retro** also shows you some graphic games of yore, with reviews of Creatures and Syndicate, as well as a glimpse at some tabloid-headline-hitting violent titles.

To complement the reviews, we take a look at the evolution of the most destructive of genres - the **light gun games**. Tim provides us with the sorry tale of the **Death of the VIC-20** too, so bring your funeral garb.

On a lighter note, we have ripped apart the **Game Boy Player** add-on for Nintendo's Gamecube, and give you the low-down on what it can (and can't) do. There's also the usual regulars, including the Seaman Diary, news and letters.

ugvm - like gaming napalm. Maybe.

deKay (Editor)

What's Inside This Issue...



Fire At Will

Evolution of light gun games.
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Turn your top of the line console into a modern-day SNES.
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Vice City

The essence of violence in video game form. BEST!
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P.N.03

Style, guns, explosions.
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VICtorious?

Murdered by his parents...
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Gore of yore
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Review Scores Explained

ugvm uses a marks-out-of-5 system for scoring games in the reviews. We feel that percentage systems are silly, with there being little difference between, say, 75 and 76%. Marks out of 10 are often pointless as well, as very rarely do games score under 5 or 6/10. Having 5 points to the scale lets us get down to the nitty-gritty: is this game any good, or is it just a pile of old pants?

You can think of the scores as being roughly equivalent to these simple to digest phrases:

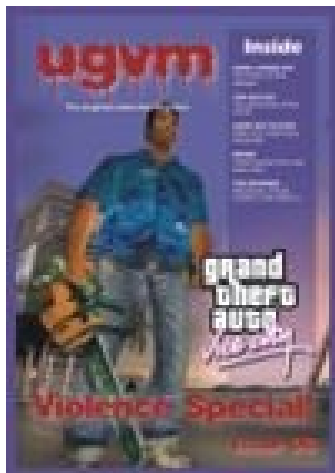
1/5 - "Not even worth a look"

2/5 - "Only think about it if you're a real fan of this type of game"

3/5 - "Average. Probably still playable, but not the best of its kind"

4/5 - "A good game, perhaps with just one or two minor flaws"

5/5 - "You need to own this game. Now."



Awards

Games which score 4/5 also gain the coveted **ugvm Silver Award**, and games achieving the top marks of 5/5 are awarded the even more fantastic **ugvm Gold Award**. These awards are to show that these games really are something you want to play.



Comment

Red Eyes Shining

Neil Fletcher ponders a non-violent game society

We all know that violent games cause our tiny minds to be overcome with rage, spittle flying, red eyes shining as we cave in the skull of that person in the supermarket that looked at us funny. It's just the typical release that every gamer has, after a quick go of Vice City.

However, do we actually need violent games?

Games can be fun without the violence; a prime example of this is Nintendo's family friendly output. The love-in that is Animal Crossing, where you capture living creatures and imprison them in a grotesque museum, ready for display for all the bloodthirsty viewers. Mario and his quest to clean the island, viciously crushing his enemies as he bounces around the landscape. The cute little Pikmin being enslaved and controlled by an outside dictator, driving them into battle and to their deaths.

It's possible to see violence in everything, depending on the slant that you take. Violent games sell, so companies use the violence as a selling point, ensuring that the media get outraged and boosting the sales figures of otherwise mediocre games. The worst thing about this is not that the games are violent, it's that the gamers are more sensitive to the cynical advertising than the violent images.

Now, excuse me while I go find my baseball bat, I've got some shopping to do...

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ugvm News

Lara moves (development) house

Possibly due to the abysmal state of the latest game, Eidos has given the Lara Croft franchise to Crystal Dynamics, removing the rights to make future games away from her creators, Core. It's now expected that the next Tomb Raider game won't appear until 2005.



It's not just the publishers who are disappointed with the quality of the Angel of Darkness. Paramount, who've just released the second Lara Croft film in the US, are blaming the game because their opening weekend takings were lower than expected. It doesn't seem to occur to them that people might not be going to see it because the film hasn't been given a single good review.

Is that a Playstation in your Pocket?

Sony's big news at E3 was the launch of its Playstation Portable, or PSP. Since the first, vague announcements, there have been a slew of magazine mock-ups, speculative guesses and outright lies. But now some real facts are emerging.

The main CPU of the PSP will lie somewhere between the PSOne and the PS2. Accompanying this are a couple of graphics chips, one dealing purely with polygons and one with curved surfaces, texture compression, and clipping. Games will be stored on a Minidisc-style disc, with a capacity nearly equal to Gamecube discs. The disc will be housed in a casing, and will be fast enough to allow DVD-style films to play on the fly.

Good things? Sony have announced wireless networking built in, so you can compete against others without cables. It has a memory stick holder for save games, and a USB port.

Bad things? It's going to be exceptionally difficult to port PSOne games (although some may see this as a good thing) due to different architecture. The unit is also going to have to cost a lot.

Daft things? It's able to output 7.1 sound... pretty useless when you consider it'll be output through headphones or the unit's own speaker.

Xenophobic Nintendo

Keep those nasty foreigners out! Indeed, Nintendo UK's been trying exceptionally hard to make sure that you, the public, can't buy games intended for people in other parts of the world. They've shut down a number of importers, including TQ Games of Torquay, in an effort to ensure that people would be forced to buy PAL versions of their games. The main thrust of the campaign came after Pokemon Ruby and Sapphire appeared in the official UK software charts around two months before it was scheduled to be released here.

Rather than this heavy-handed approach, we suggest the following: release games at the same time in Europe as the US, rather than making us wait for months on end.



Tangibly related to this, F-Zero GX has become the first NTSC title to not work properly on a PAL Gamecube using Freeloader. Some of the menus are not shown when using the boot-disc; however, those with an Action Replay can simply input a few codes to get around this problem.

ugvm rival shocker!

Not really of course - we're all friends here. Anyone who enjoyed our Retro Special (**ugvm03**) could do far worse than check out new magazine Retro Review, which is kind of like **ugvm**. Only different; it only concerns itself with older systems. You can find out more, and download the first issue (in PDF format, obviously) from www.retro-review.co.uk.

Child's Play

"Game Boy is for 10-year-olds. If you're 20 or 25 years old, it's probably not a good idea to draw a Game Boy out of your pocket on a Friday night in a public space."

This quote, from Ilkka Raiskinen of Nokia, is shortly to appear in a book entitled 'How to Alienate Your Target Audience in One Easy Step'.

Sakurai who?

Masahiro Sakurai, the creator of Smash Brothers and Kirby, has left Nintendo's first-party developer HAL. Officially, he says he didn't feel the need to leave. Unofficially, people believe he was feeling constrained by the games he was allowed to create.

Kirby remains a Nintendo character; however the future of the Smash Bros series is less certain.

Stop press!

Nintendo have recently announced some of their plans for the next financial year (covering up to March 2005). In short, a Gamecube version of Wario Ware, a new Zelda game based on the Wind Waker engine, and a Donkey Kong game co-developed by Namco, are accompanied by a "new surprise different from anything before", to be announced next spring. We're on the edge of our seats.

News in Brief

Halo, is it me you're looking for?

Halo has done rather well at retail, with the three millionth copy being snapped up in the past few weeks. The sequel turned many heads at E3, and the PC version is due out soon. An Xbox spokesman might have said "ROFLOLOL!! HALO == BEST!!!"

If you're not old enough...

Newer PAL games have a little black rectangle somewhere on their packaging. This is a new age rating system, designed to be used throughout Europe, called PEGI. It replaces the Elspa ratings, but still has no legal status. Rumours that the system will operate by letting the regulars of the Queen Vic decide on the ratings amongst themselves are, as yet, unconfirmed.

Gaming Spirit

The Phantom, that console that nobody believed would ever see the light of day, has come closer to release with \$25million of venture capital behind it. It seems it'll be a PC-in-a-box which'll be hooked up to a broadband network from which you can download any game you like for a set fee. Microsoft is probably looking at its patent applications now.

Star Wars VII: A New Blooper

Star Wars Galaxies launched in the States to a huge fanfare, but for days afterwards many of the gamers couldn't register on the system. Sony (the publishers of the game) state it was simply a case of unexpected demand. In future, remember: Star Wars will sell lots.

Millions of Matrices

Also remember, anything based on the Matrix will sell millions, even if it's not very good. Case Study 1: Enter the Matrix.

Loading errors galore

We love new games. We love old systems. We therefore love new games on old systems. So, apparently, do Cronosoft (<http://www.cronosoft.co.uk/>), since they're releasing new Spectrum games on tape. They hope to expand soon to other 8-bit computers, so if your CPC's sitting unloved in the loft it might be time to get your feather duster out.

Sega's no whore

Since **ugvm05**, it has been rumoured that Sega was being bought up by almost every company under the sun. Recently, however, the firm's released its yearly financial figures for 2002/03, and once again it's made a profit. Rather than selling itself, it's taken this opportunity to reorganise its internal teams... although some of the changes seem a bit odd (Sonic Team and United Game Artists merging? Er).

Cartoon



Guns: Power Up!*

In the latest in our Evolution Of... series, **deKay** takes a look at how much (or rather, how little) games involving shooting photons have changed over the years.

Think of all of the videogame periphery you've seen over the years. The marvellous, if you have a huge room, EA golf club. The pool table sized Steel Battalion control panel. The Nintendo Power Glove. The Beatmania keyboard and "deck". The Dance Dance Revolution dance mat. The list goes on. One type of peripheral was there before them all, and is still with us. A peripheral with a controversial past – the Light Gun.

Shoot First

Way back in the mists of time, before the House was full of Dead, before there was a Crisis in Time. Before Yoshi was on Safari, and even before Ducks were Hunted, the first gun game was created. In 1967, Ralph Baer (Chief Engineer and Manager of the Equipment Design Division at Sanders Associates – a large military electronics company) and colleagues converted a plastic toy rifle into a light sensitive gun. The gun could be 'shot' at a bright point on a TV screen, and hitting it made it disappear. A second 'player' could move the spot around the screen.

This game was an extension of a system developed by Baer the previous year, where two 'players' moved spots around the screen with control knobs. Of course, there was no collision detection, but to Baer at the time, it was fun nonetheless. Adding a gun to the game proved impressive enough to allow further funding to Baer for other game projects. The light gun game was created.



Magnavox Odyssey

Baer didn't stop there. He had plans for a home system that could play multiple games. This idea became the Magnavox Odyssey – the first home games console, which was finally released in 1972. Four of the games available for the Odyssey used a 'rifle' peripheral – the first home light gun games!

Meanwhile, the Japanese were not to be outdone. In 1971, Gunpei Yokoi (who would later design the Game Boy, amongst other things) co-developed a toy called the Beam Gun. The Beam Gun set came with a

'light gun' and some targets with solar cells on them. In this instance, and unlike modern gun games, the gun actually did shoot light, which the targets detected. The success of Beam Gun paved the way for Nintendo's Laser Clay Shooting System in 1973. Many old bowling alleys in Japan were converted by Nintendo to become light gun shooting galleries. Other copy-cat systems were started up world over soon afterwards. Nintendo bettered this system in '74 with Wild Gunman, which showed an image of a gunslinger on the screen, who you had to shoot Quickest-on-the-Draw style. This was much later remade as a NES game, with the same name.

For several years, very little changed in the arcade. Plenty of clay pigeon shooting games popped up in what would later become videogame arcades. Some replaced the pigeons with planes, or people, but the technology and the premise remained pretty static.



Telstar Marksman

Similarly, the home consoles just copied each other and it wasn't long before the ten million Pong variants became Pong With A Gun variants. These included the 1978 Coleco Telstar Marksman, which played four versions of Pong and two shooting games, using the supplied (and rather large) gun.

The late 1970s finally gave some more original light gun games to the arcades. These were not generally based on points (or even shapes) of light like most of the older ones, but actually had digital graphics. One of the first of these was Desert Gun by Midway. The aim (sorry!) was to shoot four poor, defenceless animals. And then go onto the next stage, where you had to shoot another four. Although not very

exciting, it did introduce gamers to the need to reload your gun. Once you'd emptied the barrel, you couldn't shoot anything for a few seconds whilst your gun reloaded.

Into the early 80s, and, well, it was Business as Usual. The Atari 2600 came out, as did several rivals, and there were gun games for many of them. Unfortunately, they were almost the same as those doing the rounds in the previous decade. Slightly better graphics (you could shoot things that looked like animals and stuff, rather than just blobs). Arcade-wise, things had dried up almost entirely.

But then, in 1983, came the Nintendo NES console. And in 1984, Duck Hunt was released.



Duck Hunt

Duck Season Opens

When you think about it, Duck Hunt didn't seem to offer any new experiences to the light gun genre, apart from a grey and bright orange gun (the 'Zapper') of course. Duck Hunt was successful, and Duck Hunt sold consoles. Nintendo even released a Duck Hunt NES bundle. Why was it so great?

Because it was fun. Duck Hunt was brightly coloured, had humorous cartoon graphics and was fun! There was more depth to it than other gun games. You had just three bullets to attempt to shoot a duck (or two ducks, if you chose Game B), and the game got faster and harder. As a kind of bonus, Nintendo threw in a Game C – which was Clay Pigeon Shooting. Even as a freebie, it played better than previous clay pigeon games.

Nothing could touch Duck Hunt for years. Sega tried to copy it with some Master System games (Safari Hunt and Shooting Gallery, for example) and although they technically bettered the Nintendo game, they didn't have the fun factor. Besides,

shooting ducks is OK – shooting monkeys is wrong. Bad Sega.

Similarly, home computers such as the Spectrum and C64 gained new light gun peripherals, but there was little of note to make them worthwhile buying. Not yet, anyway.

1987 saw the next landmark in light gun history, for many reasons. The game was Operation Wolf – an arcade gun game that places you in the position of a US marine in what is quite obviously Vietnam. Did Taito give you a piddly little Zapper style light gun? No. They gave you a light machine gun.

That wasn't the only novel feature either. You had a health bar, and the ability to shoot first aid kits to replenish it. You had scrolling levels, and loads of enemies on screen at once. There were civilians that you had to avoid shooting, and baddies that took multiple shots. You had a limited supply of ammunition, which, due to rapid fire, was easily used up and extra bullet magazines had to be found. Best of all, however, was that as well as the trigger on the gun, there was also a little red button further up the barrel. Only a little button, mind, but a revolution for light gun games. This red button fired rockets.

Operation Wolf



Now games had multiple weapons. New ways of killing things. Operation Wolf allowed you to blow apart armoured vehicles and helicopters with just one press of a red button. It was genius, but came at a price. Operation Wolf was violent. For its time, it was probably the most realistically violent game in the arcades. There were complaints, and I know of at least one arcade that refused to have it. It had to happen sooner or later – gun games without violence seem childish and silly these days, in general at least.

The hit of the arcade version filtered back to the home market. Operation Wolf was ported to every format known to man at the time. Woe betide those people who didn't have a light gun but wanted to play Op Wolf, and had to make do with the keyboard or joystick. Even the Amiga and ST versions with

mouse support couldn't replicate the arcade unless there was a physical gun in your hand.

Once *Op Wolf* had got light guns into homes, other games quickly came out to use the hardware, including SNK's *Beast Busters*, Taito's *Space Gun*, and the follow-up to *Op Wolf* – *Operation Thunderbolt* (the first arcade game to have two players with lightguns). After this glut of titles, however, things started to get a little stale, both in the arcade and in the home.

For the home market, the similarities between lightgun games forced companies to try new ways of selling the hardware. The newly Amstrad-owned Spectrum now came bundled with a light gun and 6 light gun games. One interesting game in this pack was *Bullseye* – a darts game. Cheetah also produced a light gun (the "Defender"), and packaged it with 6 games, including gun-enabled versions of the Codemasters games *Superbike* *Trans-Am* and *Advanced Pinball Simulator*. Those wacky Darlings, eh?

Into the early 1990s, and more bang bang bang games were rolled out in the arcades. Nothing much of note was released at this time, apart from the film tie-in *Terminator 2*, of course. Who could forget the end of game boss battle in that game, shooting the molten-metal T-1000 and watching the bullet holes morph back to being his face? Excellent as it was, it was just another gun game. Things were about to change again, however...



Mad Dog McCree

You Wouldn't Like it When I'm Mad

In 1993, American Laser Games released *Mad Dog McCree* – a light gun game that was almost entirely video – it had actors, a script and everything! Harking back to Nintendo's *Wild Gunman*, *Mad Dog McCree* put you in the spurs of a Western lawman, out to rid the town of Mad Dog and his gang. The action was played out on screen as a sequence of video clips shown on a HUGE screen, with you having to shoot the bad guys before they shoot you. It was sort of like a live action cross between *Dragon's Lair* and *Wild Gunman*, with different film clips played depending

on how well you did. *Mad Dog McCree* was also the first arcade game I played which cost a staggering ONE POUND a go. Needless to say, I was a bit miffed to find that not only was it more than a bit crap, but that so was I.

American Laser Games quickly belted out a sequel, and several follow-ups to *Mad Dog*, with the same game structure (on-rails video) but in different situations, such as *Who Shot Johnny Rock?*, set in 1920s Chicago. Coin-op punters soon tired of them.

1994 and Konami had a go. Imagine the *Mad Dog* setting, with *Mortal Kombat* style digitised graphics, played out like *Operation Wolf*. The result was *Lethal Enforcers* (and the sequel, naturally). Around the same time, Namco tried something a bit less violent – *Point Blank*. *Point Blank* was more like a shooting gallery game, or rather, games. Lots of stages of shooting bizarre (and usually cute) stuff.

With the SNES and Megadrive now firmly wedged under the nation's TV sets, new guns were required. Nintendo's offering (the *Super Scope*) was less a light gun, and more a light rocket launcher. It quickly acquired the nickname "the drainpipe", because of its size. It came bundled with six games on one SNES cartridge, including gun-friendly versions of a Tetris clone, and *Whac-a-Mole* (although obviously, not with those names). Sega hit (or rather, shot) back with the *Menacer* gun for the Megadrive. Smaller than the SNES gun, it had bolt-on extras, like a shoulder rest (perhaps useful for the kickback it didn't have) and a pair of binoculars, in case your TV was a mile away. It too came with a six pack of games, although nothing of note.

A very bizarre game to come out for the SNES and utilise the Drainpipe was *Yoshi's Safari*. You, as Mario, rode on the back of Yoshi and shot things. You also had to jump over stuff occasionally too. It was very odd.

Keen to bring the *Lethal Enforcers* series to the home, Konami released its own gun for the two 16-bit systems – the *Justifier*. This gun was actually originally banned, because it looked so realistic. Konami responded by recolouring the pistols in bright blue and pink versions. No chance of "NINTENDO GAME ROBBED BANK" headlines then.

Virtuosity

Later in 1994, Sega's AM2 department released a new kind of light gun game in Japan. It didn't have digitised graphics. It didn't have video. It was almost entirely polygon-based. It was *Virtua Cop*.

Sega had just recently made inroads into the arcades

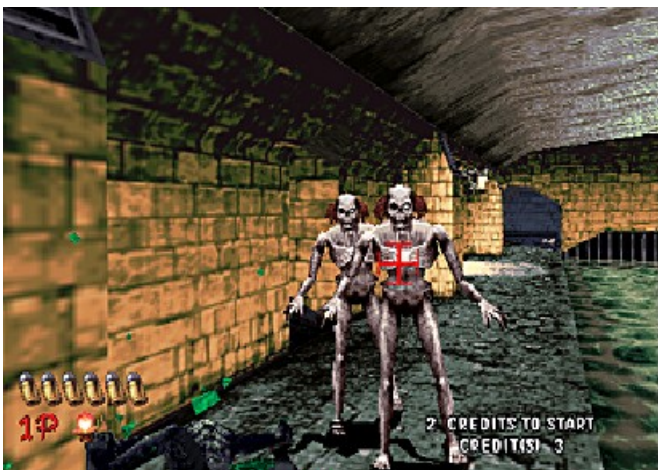


Virtua Cop

with its new Model 1 architecture (which ran Virtua Racing and Virtua Fighter). An updated version of the hardware (Model 2, unsurprisingly) was developed, and Virtua Cop was one of the first games to use it. The polygon base of the game allowed targets to respond not only to being hit, but where they were hit as well.

Not to be out-done, Namco soon released Time Crisis. Similar to Virtua Cop in looks, it did have a simple but original feature – a foot-pedal. By standing on this, you could hide behind objects, and also reload your gun. Release the pedal, and you leapt out and into the crossfire. You couldn't just hide forever, though, as Namco also threw in a time limit for the levels, meaning you had to hide as little as possible. This added a new element to gun games – some strategy. Should you risk taking hits, and blast your way through the level as quickly as possible, or hide to stop yourself being shot but lose time in the process?

In the home console market, the Sega Saturn and Sony Playstation were soon launched. Sega's machine inevitably gained a conversion of Virtua Cop (and later, VC2). Namco sided with Sony, and released Time Crisis on that machine, along with the Gun-Con light gun. A button on the side of the gun replaced the pedal from the arcade, or you could use a joystick in the second port and just stamp on that.



House of the Dead

Evil Dead

Sega's next successful gun game was to be something a bit different. Up until now, almost all light gun games had you in the role of a lawman or a soldier, and most seemed to be set in the Wild West. Sega changed all that in the late 90s, with a new theme – Zombies. House of the Dead was born, and played like the son of a Virtua Cop and Resident Evil marriage. Zombies and monsters had taken over a mansion, and you had to go in with your gun, trying not to get shot, eaten, or chainsawed to death. It was scary, had buckets of blood, and evil crawling things that tried to eat your face. People complained. Despite the warnings on the cabinet and the screen, apparently kids might play this game, and get scared. How awful!

Luckily, complaint did not kill off the series, and soon House of the Dead 2 was unleashed. It offered more of the same (including the ropey-but-funny Japanese translations), but added better graphics, more varied locations, and more 'routes' through the levels. Both HotD games actually gave more than one route through the game, depending on actions taken as you progress; for example, if you manage to save a bystander from a zombie attack, you get a slightly easier route (and often some extra health) as a bonus. Let her get munched, and you get the more difficult course.

The Dreamcast was released, and gained a House of the Dead 2 conversion. The DC light gun (like the DC controller) had a slot on it to hold the VMU memory card, but could also use the rumble pack as well, for a type of kick-back effect. A couple more gun games came the Dreamcast's way, including a rerelease of Virtua Cop 2 as part of the Sega Smash Pack.

That pretty much brings us up to date. Sega has just released House of the Dead 3 on the Xbox, and are working on Virtua Cop 3 for the arcade and home consoles. VC3 plans to offer the player the ability to change weapons, and includes a Time Crisis style pedal. Another light gun based Resident Evil game is out now, and bears more than a slight resemblance to House of the Dead.

One thing that can be seen from this history, is that just because the game involves you holding a gun, doesn't mean that the game is going to be excessively violent. There are far more gore-filled and nasty non-gun games around. Even Mad Dog McCree with its 'real' people being shot, doesn't come close to the violence of Vice City, or Splatterhouse 2. Now, maybe if they made games with a light-samurai sword, or a light-lawnmower, we'd have something to really complain about...

Shoot To Kill

Some high points in the development of light gun games.



1967: Ralph Baer's first light gun

Although no electronic scoring had been created, Baer's gun game was just as they are today: shoot something on the screen.



1976: Kousenjuu Custom Gunman

Wario Ware players will recognise this Nintendo Beam Gun toy. Shoot the outlaw and he falls down. Realistic!



1977: Desert Gun

One of the first proper digital arcade gun games - but essentially plays just like a shooting gallery.



1984: Duck Hunt

Probably the most famous of all light guns shooters, and still fun today. Another game to crop up on Wario Ware too.



1987: Operation Wolf

Violent, loud, and came with rockets - Op Wolf was an instant success and became the most remembered arcade gun game.



1993: Mad Dog McCree

Shunning graphics for video, American Laser Games tried something new with the genre. Sadly, it was over milked.



1994: Point Blank

Returning to the Shooting Gallery roots, Namco threw in loads of mini games adding new reasons for shooting things.



1993: Yoshi's Safari

Only the warped mind of Nintendo could come up with this. A fun game all the same, but not one well remembered.



1994: Virtua Cop

The first real polygon-based gun game. The way baddies reacted to being shot was far more realistic than any previous title.

Each issue, **ugvm** looks at a machine from the past. There's no way that anyone could possibly hope to own each and every gaming machine ever released - not even the BFI's got there yet, and they've been trying for years. This article should carry a health warning therefore: reading about other consoles could seriously damage your wallet.

VIC Vapo-Rub

This issue, **Tim Miller** looks at how a business computer giant moved in on the home market, and then killed off its own machine

In the late 1970s, Commodore were a force to be reckoned with in the business computer market. The company began life in New York in the 1950s, as a typewriter repair shop, before moving to Toronto and specialising in office furniture. The first Commodore PET business computer was sold in June 1977, after Commodore had bought out MOS Technologies. The computing firm had been working with the 6502 processor, and the PET was based around this.

Commodore's business computers were well designed, reliable, and powerful - they sold well, and Jack Tramiel, Commodore's founder and owner, looked for a way to expand on the traditional computer market. By 1980, sales of videogame consoles was starting to slow, and Tramiel believed that the home market was ready for a fully-functional computer. By selling an "educational" machine, Commodore hoped to sell to all those parents who thought their children shouldn't waste their time playing games.

The VIC-20 was designed in 1979, and released in Japan (as the VIC-1001) in 1980. The design of the computer was based around Commodore's own VIC-I chip, which was originally designed to be used in third-party consoles - after the market started to slow, nobody wanted to use the chip, and Commodore took the opportunity to incorporate it in their computer designs. Commodore also included memory in 1k chips, since there was a surplus of these chips left over from their business computers.

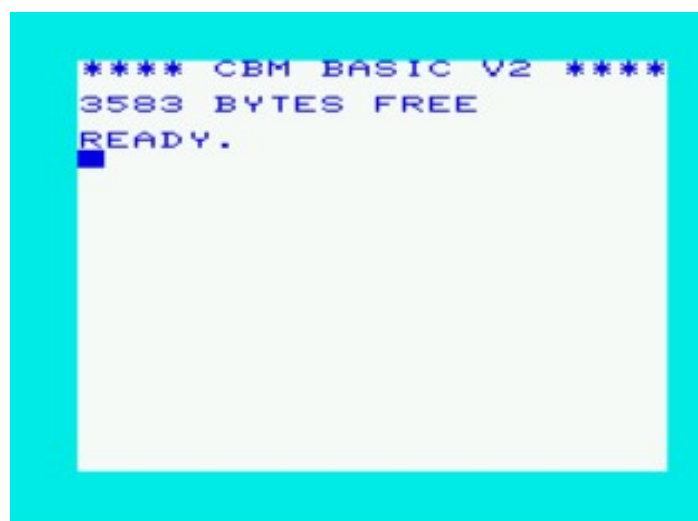


Pole Position

As for the name - why VIC-20? Despite rumours, it's got nothing to do with the total memory of the machine (21k), not the number of character per line (22) - instead, as revealed by Michael Tomczyk (who oversaw the VIC-20 project), 20 just sounded to be "a nice friendly number".

On launch, the machine had just 3.5k of RAM to program in - 1.5k of RAM was taken up by the system. The screen could display 22 characters per line, in sixteen colours; it was designed to be plugged into any TV set. There were four channels of sound, which was a vast step up from the single-channel beeps of other machines. Unlike the ZX81, at the time the market leader for home computers, the VIC-20 included user-friendly expansion ports, including a joystick socket. The machine was marketed as "the Friendly Computer", and everything about it was designed to be as non-intimidating as possible. Even the VIC-20 cassette deck, printer and (later) floppy disc were designed with this usability in mind.

Launched at \$299 in the US in 1981, and a couple of months later in the UK, the machine sold well. Advertising was aimed at parents, who were asked "Why buy just a video game?" by William Shatner. Indeed, from the responses of owners (see the "Loved in Life" boxout), it seems that many children





JetPac

owned the computer because their parents thought they'd do more than just play games on it.

Commodore certainly tried their best to make sure this was the case. The VIC-20 manual contained detailed information about programming in BASIC, and many of the magazines contained their own programmes in the form of BASIC listings. However, many machines were used just for games, which were available on tape (to be loaded through a separately-available cassette deck) or on cartridge (which plugged into the back of the

Loved In Life

"I really liked the VIC-20, and remember trying to type in programs from magazines such as 'Big K' which basically consisted of pages and pages of games to program in. Usually there would be three or so per platform, with others like the Spectrum & Dragon 32. I never once got one to work. Each month Big K would print amendment lines to the previous month's code to fix problems; why didn't I ever learn not to waste my time with this stuff? I'd love to see a working example of at least one VIC-20 Big K program!" (Harry Watson)

"I can only have been 7 or 8 when we bought the VIC-20; it was very exciting, as we'd never had a home computer before. The reason for buying it was that my Mum had been asked to teach some computer science lessons at her school, and as she knew very little about computers thought she'd better have one at home to practice on. I remember being amazed that I could get it to do things - just by typing in a very simple program in BASIC, I could fill the screen with the word 'HELLO' printed thousands of times (I've always been pleased by small things)!" (Stuart Lucas)

"Games I remember vividly are the cartridge games which you would slot in the back on the machine. Of those I had a text-based adventure "Mission Impossible" which was based on the TV show. There was "Lunar Lander" which was a game of softly landing your moon ship on the furthest platform you could without losing your fuel. But my favourite cartridge-based game of all time was "Omega Race". Basically it was Asteroids, but you could bounce off the sides of the outer walls, and you had try to shoot the aliens which were dropping mines. The physics engine was spot on." (Harry Watson)

"Probably the best game for the unexpanded VIC-20 was Jeff Minter's Gridrunner. It was later converted to many platforms but this is still the definitive version for me. It was blindingly fast with amazing sound effects - two things you might not normally associate with the VIC-20." (Andrew Layden)

"Blitz [was a game where] your plane flies slowly over a screenful of skyscrapers, getting one row lower each time it crosses the screen. You have exactly one

control - hitting the space bar to drop bombs - and by careful timing you have to level the city, one skyscraper at a time, before your plane gets low enough to crash into them. Sounds thrilling, eh? And this was after you'd waited 5 minutes for the game to load (those were the days of saving computer programs on tape - I believe you could get floppy drives for the VIC-20, but the computer hardly justified it)." (Stuart Lucas)

"Colour graphics were a great move forward at the time. I first saw a VIC-20 when I attended my first 'computer club' meeting when I was 10, clutching my prized ZX81. The moment I saw it I knew I had to have one - and soon. Unfortunately it took me a while to save up the money to get one." (Martin Linklater)

"The game that drove the whole family mad more than any other, had to be Rockman, a Boulderdash clone - due to its addictive gameplay, "I just KNOW I'll manage it next time" difficulty level, and *incredibly irritating music that you couldn't turn off!* Aaarrghh!" (Stuart Lucas)

machine). The games were in full colour, and (at first) much better and more complex than any console could achieve.

Technology marched on, however, and relatively quickly users were reaching the limits of their machines. Commodore made available switchable RAM packs, expanding the memory available to the computer up to 16k - the packs could be switched to include only 8k for those games that wouldn't run with more. In keeping with the general ethos of the machine, the RAM packs were sold at an affordable price, and nearly every VIC-20 owner bought one.



VIC-20 Cartridge

But such expansions could only last a limited time. In late 1982, Commodore launched the Commodore 64, a direct replacement for the VIC. Almost as soon as the C64 was released, Commodore started to scale back its support for the older machine, leaving many owners slightly miffed. Most programmers were lured away to by promise of larger memory and greater graphical capabilities. Despite the fact that by 1983, the VIC-20 had sold over a million units, it was almost commercially dead.

Commodore hoped that all its VIC-20 owners would upgrade to the C64, but many didn't, despite the firm's offers of cashback if they exchanged any older machine in for the new one. The price point of the VIC was dropped several times, becoming the first colour computer to retail for less than \$100 in the USA. By the beginning of 1984, sales of the VIC were still strong, and Commodore believed they were adversely affecting the uptake of their new machine. Rather than drop the price of the C64, Commodore stopped manufacturing the VIC-20.

It was an undignified end to a machine that was the first to sell in big numbers to people who'd normally not even dream of owning a computer. It was the first step of many a programmer's career, it contributed significantly to the levels of computer literacy we have today. And it was killed by its own maker.

Destroyed by Death

"By about 1986, VIC-20 games were becoming increasingly scarce on the store shelves and it was time to move on to the C64. However, I occasionally brought out the Vic for a quick play on some games until the early 90's when it finally died on me. I still have all my games, in the hope that someday I might get my hands on another machine again." (Andrew Layden)

"The VIC-20 was a fixture in my living room for years, despite its obsolescence and increasingly temperamental behaviour (not helped by the time I knocked it off the top of a table on to the floor - we had hours of fun taking it apart, identifying damaged connections, and soldering them back together, with an impressive

degree of success). Gradually, though, it saw less and less use and when we could eventually afford to buy a new computer (an Amiga 1500, when I was 13 or 14) the 'old doorstep' was quietly retired to my parents' attic, where I believe it still remains." (Stuart Lucas)

"To me the only thing which toppled the VIC-20 at the top of the home computer scene was the C64, which was a truly awesome machine. In typical Commodore fashion the VIC-20 received virtually no advertising outside of the USA and mainly found new buyers by word of mouth. They were hideously expensive compared to the diminutive ZX81 and the popular Spectrum, both of which had their charms but

were ultimately inferior. I found my VIC-20 in the loft at my parents' house back in 1998 and decided to see if it still worked. The thing fired up first go. Even after being in the loft for over a decade. Built to last." (Martin Linklater)

"It seems a shame to me that today's vastly superior machines don't have quite the same hands-on accessibility (for programming) as the 8-bit generation did. As well as learning the VIC-20's own slightly quirky version of BASIC I gained a good idea of the capabilities and limitations of computers generally, and a confidence in my ability to use them, both of which have been extremely valuable in later life." (Stuart Lucas)

Linklater's Favourites

Many programmers started on the VIC-20, writing short BASIC programs on the 22-character display. Some went on to great things, such as Quantum Redshift developer **Martin Linklater**. Were these his inspiration?



Arcadia (Imagine)

The fastest most frustrating shoot-em-up I've ever played. Wave after wave of nondescript objects heading towards you in bizarre patterns. So frustrating that I couldn't put the joystick down for hours and used to leave the machine with severe cramp in my sweaty hands. Intense.

Wacky Waiters (Imagine)

Another frustrating game where a palsied waiter jerked his way across elevators to deliver food and receive tips.

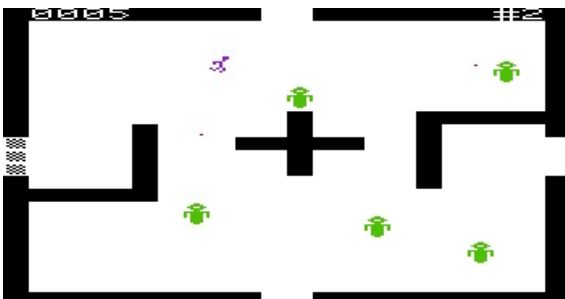


Jelly Monsters (Commodore cartridge)

The best 'pacman' game of its time. Huge colourful characters colour clashed their way around the map accompanied by the wakka-wakka of Pacman's jaws. This just blew away anything on the Spectrum or 2600.

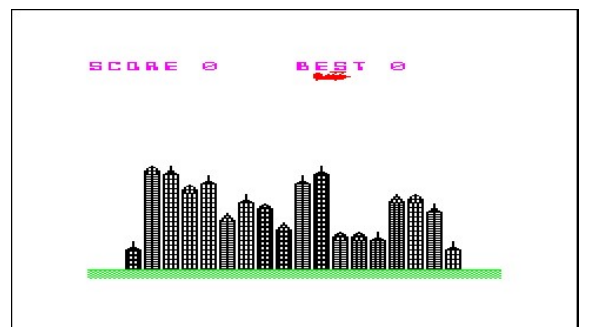
Blitz (Commodore)

Bomb the buildings before your plane lands. Immensely hard, but great when the plane finally lands and the pilot pops his head out the cockpit and gives you a wave.



Amok (UMI)

Classic robot shooter. This impressed me with its almost rotoscoped main character and smoothly moving robots. Touch anything and you're dead though.



Further Information

Games available from

<http://www.highstreetmicro.co.uk/comvic20.htm>

Demos available from

<http://www.mds.mdh.se/~dal95acn/vic20.html>

VICE, a VIC-20 emulator: <http://viceteam.bei.t-online.de/>

Twisted Metal: Black Online

"A game about a charred corkscrew?" ponders **deKay**

The box proclaims 'Online Only', which is probably why TM:BO is so cheap. Until you play the game that is, and then realise the other reason why it's so cheap. Fighting cars with guns and missiles, in a large partially collapsible arena, against up to seven other players over the internet or on a LAN. It can't be bad, surely?

To some extent, it isn't. There is a nice variety of cars to choose (naturally, each has its own handling and speed characteristics) and multiple weapons to collect and fire. The level layouts vary drastically which adds variety, although sadly virtually everyone online seems to use the Suburbs level which is a bit overly large, sparse and grey. Actually, most of the levels seem to be a bit grey, which makes the graphics appear dull and bland.

The car models are OK, but nothing special. They take visible damage, and get torched, blackened and burnt. Some of the weapon effects are nice too, but again, not spectacular. The music is forgettable, and the sound effects passable. To be frank, the overall presentation of the game screams "average". Not that we at **ugvm** are that concerned with the appearance or sonics of a game, assuming the playability is there.

And it is. A bit. For a while. The controls are initially frustrating but there are plenty of alternative options, plus you can use either the d-pad or the sticks for both direction and speed. Although you can then move onto some solitary driving (set up a LAN game for only yourself), it will only help you get used to the controls. Any real training must be done 'in the field'.

Off you go then, into your first online game. And get slaughtered. The main reason I found for this was the lack of use the manual was in explaining how to activate and aim several of your weapons. There is also the problem of players cheating, to use special hidden moves – if "monkey" is reading, I mean you, sir. Because you only have a limited number of uses of each weapon (unless you're in unlimited weapon



mode), allowing players to access other special weapons through a cheat code ruins the game. If they can make themselves invisible, or freeze you, even when they haven't picked up anything is unfair. Yes, so you could do the same back, but that is not an excuse.

Once you have learned the levels, where to hide, where the restart points are and where health packs tend to regenerate, the game improves. Spend some time with different vehicles, and you'll soon find one suited to your playing style. TM:BO becomes much more enjoyable after several hours play.

Sadly, and you saw this coming, it starts to get boring pretty soon. Players leave the game as soon as they realise what they're up against and so often the play area becomes emptied, forcing you into another game. Also, it is all too easy to spot the newbies – they're the ones that can't work out how to change their name from "player". As a result, more experienced players will seek and destroy the easy prey to bump up the number of kills, rather than stick around and fight the old hands. Once this starts the game quickly deteriorates into a round of Kill the Newbie.

Twisted Metal: Black Online is still good for a blast here and there. With a private net game, it improves, and like many online games the fun increases if you know who you are killing. Sadly, some silly flaws and the lack of any offline modes let it down.

2/5





Grand Theft Auto

"Honestly!" says **Tim Miller**, "It's my car! I've just misplaced the keys!"

The Daily Mail does not want you to play this game. If you do, you will turn into a raving killer, and society will crumble. Or, at least, that's what they believe.

When GTA was first released in 1997 (in Europe first, by the way), it was truly ground-breaking. Viewed from overhead, the amount of freedom you were given to do whatever you liked was pretty much unheard of, and the reactions to your actions were seemingly complex and well designed. Blow up a car with a rocket launcher? Any police nearby will be on your tail pretty damn sharpish. Punch someone random on the street? You may well find yourself attacked by a good Samaritan.

The game's largely mission based, and although you don't have to do these if you don't want to, it's the quickest way to get money, and it's money that gets

you onto the next level. There's a total of three maps, with two sets of missions on each, and these can get pretty tricky towards the end of the game with time limits imposed on races across the city in stolen cars.

The range of vehicles is pretty impressive, and each handles differently to all others. The motorbikes are fast but unstable; the lorries are slow and cumbersome, but can take a lot of damage. Equally, the range of weapons is great, from fists to flamethrowers to rocket launchers.

Graphically, the game has not aged well. The Playstation incarnation was always lacking compared to the PC, with stuttering framerates if your car starts to move too fast and low-definition sprites. Manoeuvring your character when out of the car is a little tricky when he seems to get snagged on seemingly nothing. However, there's not a lot wrong with the presentation, and sonically the game excels. Indeed, you may find the game disc spends a significant amount of time in your CD player rather than the Playstation/PC so you can listen to the radio stations.

Although it's been largely superseded by newer games in the series, the original's still easily worth your money for the price it goes at nowadays. If you can, get the PC version which allows for online multiplayer and doesn't suffer so much from glitchy graphics. But for those with limited time to play games, there are better ones out there.



WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth

OJLim oils himself up and steps into the ring. Dear god, no...



WWE (formerly F, lest you forget) games have been around since the 8-bit days. It's a big, money making franchise. A largely crap franchise to boot. Anyone who remembers the likes of Royal Rumble for the SNES or the eternally-terrible Wrestlemania for the Amiga will know this fact. The switch to realistic 3D wrestling helped a bit, with THQ striking lucky with No Mercy on N64 and then following that with many poor button bashers for the PSX/PS2 known as the Smackdown series.

Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth (yes, that is *really* the title) is the second WWE game on the PS2. The first PS2 Smackdown game, Know Your Role, was a quickly made THQ cash-in of lameness, featuring few wrestlers and options. So what does Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth, do to change this? Muchos wrestlers and options. Hulk Hogan, The Rock, The Undertaker; they're all here lovingly modelled and complete with accurate move sets.

In terms of options, SYM has pretty much every match option you could possibly want. Tag Team, Cages, Hell In A Cell, TLC and much more; it's all here. Unfortunately, some of the match types are largely useless as table matches can be won within seconds and the ladder matches are frustratingly difficult due to the cumbersome nature of the ladder. Fortunately the majority of the match types are well done - slam your opponent from the top of the cage in a Hell In A Cell match (re-creating the classic Undertaker/Mankind fight) and enjoy the drop.

SYM's create-a-wrestler mode is fantastic, with countless face-types, costumes, tattoos, moves and many other items to customise your own wrestler. Thanks to the great body-morphing abilities, you can create some extremely sick-looking fighters and then take them into career mode to win the championship. Unfortunately, career mode is ultimately flawed by being too damn easy. There is still little technique needed to win a match since the computer AI is terrible, and as a result, the joy of actually climbing up the ranks is diluted.

However, bring a few friends over and suddenly SYM significantly improves. The game really excels in multiplayer, and the ease in which moves can be pulled off excels for the pick-up-and-play aspect of the game.

Sadly this button-bashing aspect of the game ultimately becomes more of a problem than a plus, because it puts SYM in the same league as the Gamecube's Super Smash Bros as a fighter. In wrestling games, technical skill comes into play with the grapple and reversal system, which determines which player is in control and what moves can be used. No Mercy on the N64 or any of the FirePro Wrestling games are examples of excellent grappling systems which help enhance the gaming experience. Unfortunately, SYM's version of it is completely flawed due to the fact it is totally based on luck. To reverse a move, you have to guess the move that the opponent is going to use and press the same combination of buttons to counter it. How you're supposed to guess accurately is something only Yukes and THQ must know, because this flaw is really accentuated in multiplayer mode where one person can completely control a match because of it.

Other sticky points are the inability to break submission moves and an occasionally dodgy collision detection which pull you from your immersion in the game. And if wrestling can't immerse you into its world of over-the-top insanity, then it's really not doing its job.



Bloodrayne

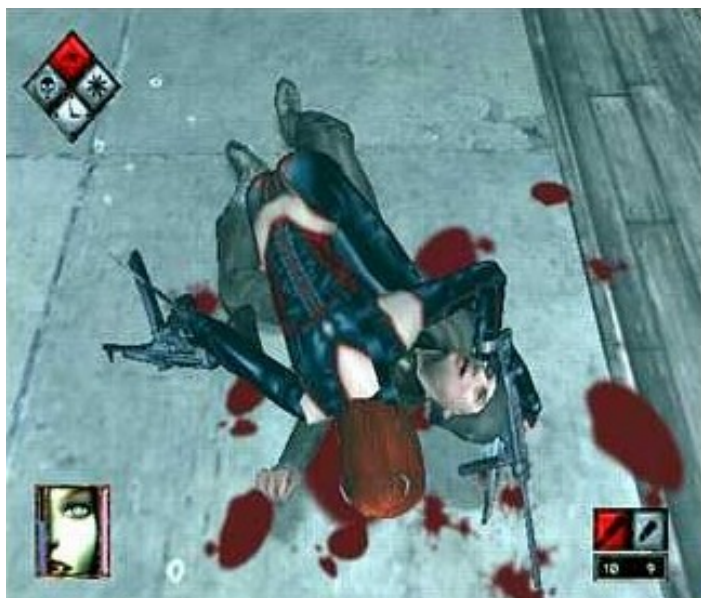
Covert Badger wants to bite your finger. Mmmm, blood.

I'm not sure why I bought this; mediocre reviews across the board, and a rather generic look that normally turns me right off a game. Perhaps it's because I generally am quite interested in all things vampire. Not to the extent that I'm one of those weird goth-types, you understand; the real-life story of Vlad the Impaler is fascinating (and gory), Terry Pratchett's vampires are wonderful, I Am Legend is a great book, and I'm a Buffy/Angel loon, but you can stick your Anne Rice where - appropriately - the sun doesn't shine. Anyhow, bought it I did.

You start with an obligatory tutorial section that walks you through the game's combat mechanics, which are actually pretty good. It all feels very smooth and satisfying, and is reminiscent of Buffy on the Xbox (though with less environmental interaction). Central to the combat is the ability to pounce on a hapless foe and suck their blood for a handy energy refill, which is all the more entertaining for Bloodrayne's highly suspicious moans and groans of pleasure. This ability ultimately makes the game a bit easy, however, as it means that you can replenish your health pretty much any time you choose.

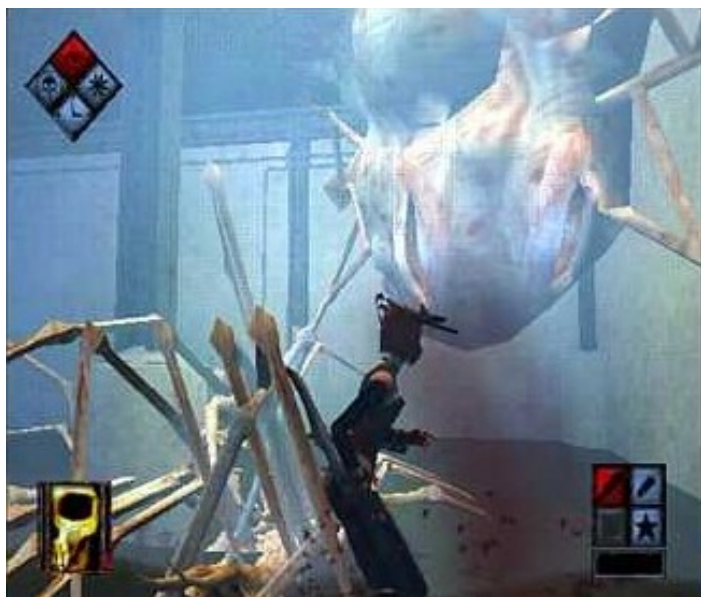
Your sensei for this tutorial is the unfortunately-monikered Mynce, which has to be the worst name ever. Reminds me of Alan Partridge - "What did you have for breakfast, Camp David?" "Oooh, mince!". Ha. Unfortunately (or not, as the case may be), Mynce gets minced by evil types, and thus you get the hopelessly thin extra motivation for kicking evil ass for the rest of the game. Think every Jean-Claude Van Damme film ever - some fighting, then it gets personal. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that there isn't a great deal to do. Once you've beaten up





one bad guy you've seen most of what the game has to offer; even though the fang-fodder switches from generic zombies to equally-generic Nazis, you never really need to develop any skills that you didn't learn in the first 5 minutes. There are a couple of breaks with formula, e.g. a chase sequence across some rooftops which is intensely annoying because you can't follow your target directly - get too far ahead or behind and you have to start again; but basically the game consists of repetitive fights in different environments.

Spicing things up a little is the bloodlust meter which, when activated, allows you to go nuts and deal out some serious damage in trendy the-designer-is-obviously-a-Matrix-fan slow motion, but after a while you get the ability to slow time at will which defeats the point of the bloodlust (except bloodlust makes your attacks a bit more powerful, not that you really need it). Interestingly, you can go slo-mo for indefinite periods and as often as you like which initially makes for some fun and stylish scrapping, but



inevitably you overuse the feature and the novelty wears off fast. The 'sniper' mode, where Bloodrayne gets enhanced vision that allows attacks from distance, is also initially cool but likewise quickly gets old and lessens the challenge further.

Graphically, it suffers from multi-format-release syndrome, but worse than usual. Usually, the PS2 takes the blame for a multiformat game that looks unimpressive on the GC (and Xbox), but the PS2 is capable of far more than is shown here so there really is little excuse. It looks like the early outdoor stages of Shadowman on the N64, but with better textures. As for audio, hell, there's nothing standout at all.



Overall, the game strikes me as a bit of a missed opportunity. The fighting engine is nearly as good as the aforementioned Buffy game (or its spiritual successor, Indiana Jones), but the repetition grinds it down. A combo system similar to the sublime P.N.03 would have given some replay value, but no such luck. Pity.

There is a twist, though. As much as it shames me to admit it, this game has avoided the ignominy of eBay (which is where I got it from to start with) because occasionally I like to dish out some mindless violence, and the animation of Bloodrayne herself is good enough to make the effort worthwhile in a brain-switched-off kind of way. This makes it difficult to score, because there's something there that drags me back every so often (normally post-pub). Therefore I'll give it 2/5, but - back to Van Damme films - it's a Bloodsport 2/5 (i.e. crap but oddly compulsive) rather than a Timecop 2/5 (i.e. crap). If you don't see the difference, don't bother with this game.

2/5



SNK vs Capcom: Match of the Millennium

As usual, **Jim Taylor's** review is three years late (not unlike **ugvm** then! **Tim**)

Ah the NeoGeo Pocket Colour, a lovely console boasting arguably the best collection of handheld gaming fun ever. The GBA may have won the handheld war on sales alone but for many the NGPC was the true haven for quality games.

One of its finest hours was SNK's Match of the Millennium (MOTM), the second Capcom vs SNK crossover (the superb Card Fighters Clash being the first) and produced wholly by SNK. Those of you who have played Capcom vs SNK on the DC/PS2/etc. will know the basic formula by now; however, to convert 26 fighters from their grown up counterpart games to the small screen was quite an achievement. Each character, be they Ryu, Iori, Zangief or Nakoruru, has all their moves intact and unparalleled control as provided by the NGPC's lovely mini-joystick and despite only having two buttons.

When playing you have the choice of playing the Capcom style charge system where your power meter rises as you pull off successful attacks or the SNK style where you either charge your power bar manually or defend successfully to increase the bar. Of course all the usual super moves are included.



MOTM follows the normal beat 'em up formula of a story mode in which you face off against a number of characters including your main company rival (e.g. Ken and Terry Bogard) then later on the opposing Boss - so if you're playing as a Capcom character you'll face Geese, for SNK you get M. Bison. There's also a Versus link up mode.

As well as the standard modes there are further distractions to keep you hooked. There's a Tag mode in a Marvel vs Capcom style, a 3 character Team mode for the SNK fans and, most distracting of all, an Olympic mode. This consists of a number of sub games including a Survival mode, a DDR style game and a Ghosts 'n' Goblins spin-off jumping game. Completing each earns you points which can be spent on new moves for your characters such as Ryu's Shin Shouryuken or Kyo's 182 Ways.

You only start the game with 18 characters available but as you play through you have the opportunity to unlock secret characters, the higher the difficulty the more chance of unlocking someone and it's definitely worth battling through on the higher levels so you can unlock the super-powerful (and cool) Evil Ryu and Orochi Iori.

MOTM is quite possibly the best handheld fighter game in existence, not only is the game itself a fantastic effort but the whole package of extra modes and unlockables makes it worth owning. If you have the cash to spare then I heartily recommend you track down a second hand NGPC and a copy of MOTM. It'll be more than worth it.

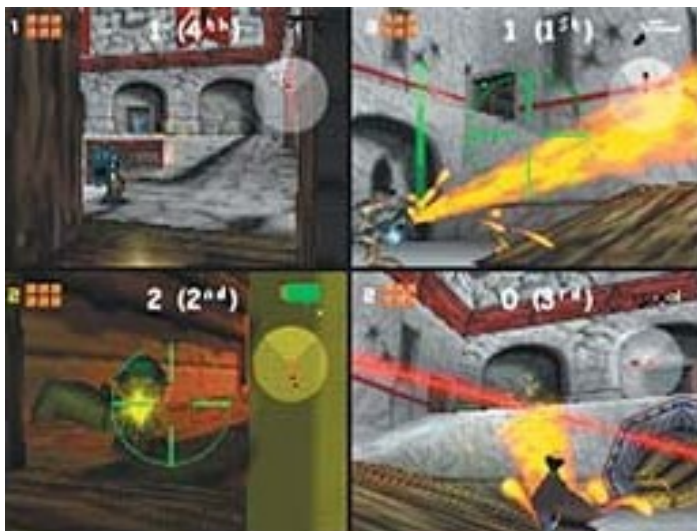




Conker's Bad Fur Day

Since he too has a drink problem and a large, bushy tail, **Tim Miller** can sympathise with this squirrel's predicament

Nintendo owners mourn the loss of Rare to Microsoft in various ways. Some regret the loss of the developers of Goldeneye, still considered to be the best console first-person shooter by many. Some regret the fact that Starfox Adventures had so much potential, and yet was obviously rushed to completion.



Some regret that it'll set back development of the sequel to Conker's Bad Fur Day by a year or so, as it was originally being touted for the Gamecube. For those people, more numerous in number than may first be thought, buying an Xbox will be a necessity.

And this is the reason. Rare created several platform games for the N64, but never to quite a scale or to such high a quality. Taking a character from a cutesy Gameboy game, and adding swearing, sex, and general bad behaviour, Conker's Bad Fur Day is one of the most immature "mature" games around, and is hilarious because of it.

Conker's a squirrel with a drink problem. Following a particularly heavy night out, he wakes up and realises he doesn't know where he is, and he's got to get home. After that, the plot gets a bit looser, meaning you have to guide Conker through a great variety of levels, with no real goal other than just getting to the end.

But for some reason, you'll really want to. Whether

Review

it's the hope that everything will get explained at the end, or the curiosity over what'll happen next, the game drives you onwards until, eventually, you complete it. And when you do, you'll wish you hadn't.

Enough about the end though; what's the game like? You'll no doubt have looked at the score by now, and seen that it's good, so that needn't be expressed. You'll also have seen the screenshots, which show a level of colour and detail rarely seen in titles for Nintendo's old grey curvy box. But where this game really shines is the humour. Fart jokes, torching bats, throwing a vampire into a grinder, shooting teddy bears and seeing the stuffing flying about, dung beetles with a Scouse accent; there's so much that's puerile yet amusing that I don't even need to mention the part of the game that everyone remembers - the fight with the operatic poo. Oops.

Humour's not just puerile tat, however - a game based purely on toilet jokes would wear thin fast. Built into the levels are some very good parodies, including versions of the Matrix, the Normandy beach landings, and even self-parodies. Conker's remarks to camera are often superbly placed to break up tension.

The gameplay's a little so-so - there's nothing really innovative, and you'll never wonder what you've got to do (it's just actually doing it that's the hard part). The moves Conker can perform are quite limited, although the context-sensitive button leads to some different gameplay elements. But with such a varied level design, and with the violence, swearing and toilet humour that clash completely with the cartoonish graphics, the fact that this is just a platform game can easily get overlooked.

While this is a superb single-player game, there are extensive multiplayer options, and some of the



games will have everyone amused for hours at a time. Much as it pains me to admit it, my brother and I spent a good twenty minutes weeing on each other in the loos in the basement of one of the deathmatch maps.

It's a game that could never be imitated, and, at least in the immature stakes, probably can never be bettered. Everyone should play this game, even if it is just to realise what it's like to sit on a dinosaur's head and bite cavemen in half.

5/5

ugvm

Gold Award





P.N.03

At last, a game in which **Covert Badger** can live out his cat-suit fantasies!

This is the first of the 'Capcom 5' to be released, and is the one in which I was most immediately interested back when the first screenshots of the 5 started to appear, but when the hands-on reports started appearing on major websites they were less than ecstatic and my faith started to waver. They all complained about twitchy controls, which is the kiss of death for a high-octane shooter, and more importantly the bane of my gaming life. I can forgive patchy graphics, mediocre sound, even unbalanced gameplay or (gasp) the occasional crash, but bad controls are fatal. Everything else can be overlooked if the game is *fun*, but bad controls lead to frustration, a tendency to blame the game for every mistake, and ultimately an undignified departure on eBay. I needn't have worried.

No doubt many people have read the aforementioned hands-on impressions and are suffering from the same doubts about the game that I did, so I'll address the control system first. Firstly, it's true - you can't run and shoot simultaneously. Second - that doesn't matter a damn. It's like complaining you have to take your foot off the accelerator and press the clutch to change gear. Whilst you could argue that it might be easier if you didn't have to do so, you have to admit that there's a sense of satisfying rhythm and timing in redlining your car up a motorway sliproad, and P.N.03 benefits from the same principle.

At a basic level, the controls are focussed on keeping you facing forward, using sidesteps to avoid enemy fire. Pull down on the stick and you don't turn around like in so many other games; you just hop back a bit.

Vanessa (our lovely protagonist and the eponymous Project Number 03) automatically locks on to the nearest enemy in range - though you can manually switch, more of which later - so complaints about oversensitivity leading to overturning are missing the point. You're not *supposed* to make slight adjustments with the stick, you mainly use it to move into position, not to aim. L and R sidestep, with a double tap causing a cartwheel for extra distance. You can do 90-degree and 180-degree turns with the Z button, but you only need this if you accidentally let a bad guy get behind you, which you'll soon learn not to do.

Because you can't run and shoot, the basic mechanic of the game is split into two. The first part involves entering a room, taking a split-second to absorb the layout of the room and the position of the enemies (made tricky by the fact that some of them can cloak and warp), and then running/leaping/rolling/strafing into what you think is the best base of operations. The second part is, well, the shooting. You sidestep in and out of cover, shoot the hell out of whatever is targeted, cartwheel to avoid return fire, rinse and repeat. When you've destroyed everything, you either enter the next room, or move onto the next wave of baddies if it's a big room. Each level is divided into discrete rooms - upon leaving each one you get a stats screen listing the number of enemies, how many you killed, your best combo, the time taken, and so on. At the end of a level, you get a totals screen and a ranking.

The move, shoot, hide, repeat mechanics sound a little dull on their own, but there's a combo system in place that increasingly dominates the game as you start to get used to it. Kill a baddie, and a timer starts to count down. Kill another before it reaches zero, and the kill count chains into a combo. Given that the game, like many shooters, is quite easy to finish (on easy/normal anyway - about 5 hours first time, then 2 hours right through if you skip the trial missions





available between each main mission), it quickly becomes clear that the combo/high score system forms the foundation of the game's replay value. And the combo system is beautifully implemented. Easy-to-kill baddies only give you a few seconds on the timer, whereas tougher ones give you more. But often the rooms are big and you don't have time to chain the first wave into the second, so you start thinking about softening up the tough guys, then taking out the weak ones, then finishing off the tough ones so you get all the kills in a few seconds, hopefully finishing on a tough bad guy to give you time to reach the next wave. Changing the targeted enemy eventually evolves from a seemingly-pointless option to a critical tactical move. Chuck in a bonus for finishing a room without taking any damage, plus some laser grid obstacles that slow you down and eat seconds out of your dwindling combo timer, plus nasty laser sentries capable of killing you in one shot, and the completist junkies amongst you will spend days trying to work out a method for clearing a large room with maximum points.

The importance of the combo dawns on you over time, although that could be happy coincidence or genuinely genius design. Initially you'll be concentrating on staying alive and powering up your suit between missions, but by the time you see the credits roll you'll be starting to pay more attention to the combos. And, lo and behold, finish the game and you are given the Blackbird suit, which arrives fully

powered up and with some seriously damaging special moves, and so killing things becomes trivial...thus you start concentrating on combos. Very nice. Screenshots of the game make this look like a sci-fi Max Payne or Duke Nukem, but it really isn't, and trying to play it like such games will result in much frustration - probably the cause of the bad press the game is picking up. In actual fact, it has a lot more in common with something like Ikaruga, in that it's a pure shoot-em-up with a combo system. No puzzles, no sprawling environments, just wave after wave of cannon fodder to be taken out with increasing confidence and flair.

Flair. Ah yes. Furthering the replay value is a desire to dominate the game. This is made clear in the (effortlessly stylish) intro sequence, where Vanessa faces a pair of airborne drones and makes a complete mockery of them, blithely ignoring the warning shots without even interrupting her little head-nodding, ass-shaking dance, and then effortlessly countering the real attacks. You won't get this at first, but after a while you'll be playing with the same amount of arrogance in-game. Cartwheeling away from laser fire, somersaulting over homing missiles, and segueing normal fire into the very graceful and dance-like special attacks, and you hardly notice you're doing it. It becomes so natural, and if complex movements become natural and intuitive, then the controls *can't* be bad.



Graphically, this isn't the most spectacular thing ever, but stylistically it is wonderful. The sterile environments are deliberately soulless because that's the nature of the world you play in. No people or charismatic bad guys, just technology and robots. The game engine is competent and almost certainly capable of more, but the white and silver metallic decor is beautifully cold. There are parallels with Rez - anyone who criticises Rez's wireframes and frequent lack of texture is utterly missing the point. P.N.03 looks like it does because that's the vision, not because the designers are lazy or talentless. Despite the sterility, however, some of the later areas are spectacular, with lots of external arched architecture and futuristic cityscape views - imagine a less decadent and congested Bladerunner with clean Gattaca overtones and you're on the right lines.

Sonically, it's a love/hate thing. There is little speech; in fact the only speech is in a couple of cut-scenes towards the end in which Vanessa Z Schneider speaks in a should-have-guessed-from-her-surname-but-still-came-as-a-shock German accent. She utters nary a word in-game, though. The sound effects, in particular the explosions (of which there are many), are excellent - especially played loud through a decent sound system with a suitable meaty subwoofer. My neighbours are probably less impressed, however. The music is driving industrial techno stuff, which in-game serves as adrenalin-inducing freneticism and really drives you on relentlessly, fitting the pace of the game to a tee. It also has some nicely placed moments of silence, though, which jack the anticipation up.



One of only downers is that the bosses are easy to beat, often needing just two or three special attacks, repetitive (a couple of them appear two or three times) and a little characterless (but then, they are basically just big defence robots, and ED-209 aside such machines don't often get a character-development arc). On the other hand, given that I can't read the Japanese-language comms between Vanessa and the 'Client', perhaps I'm missing some suitably tension-building discussions of what I'm



about to face. Also, the outside environments are featureless barren wastelands, which although fitting with the game's aesthetic, do not fit particularly well with the style of the gameplay - the combat system works better in fairly enclosed spaces, not sprawling desert battlefields. There aren't many of these outdoor areas though, so Capcom can be forgiven for them.

One final point - Vanessa Z Schneider is *by far* the coolest videogame character I've seen for a long time. Solid Snake? Dante? Sam Fisher? Pah, Vanessa rules. The dancing in the face of death is only part of it. She can make her snowboard-chic wraparounds recede into the side of her head with a click of her gloved fingers - the best sunglasses moment in any medium since the Terminator donned some shades to hide the fact that he'd just cut out his own eyeball with a scalpel, then checked his hair.

Final score time. Much as I'd like to, I can't quite give this a 5 and put it in the same league as the likes of Halo, Metroid Prime, and Zelda, because it's not quite as involving, ambitious and epic - somehow, it lacks the stamp of pure gold. No, hold on, it has the pure gold, but not the pure platinum. AA instead of AAA. I gave Metroid Prime a 5 in my **ugvm** review, so it'll have to be a 4. Don't let this detract you in any way, though; I see this being a winner with two gaming groups in particular. Old-skool gamers who love the high-score dynamic, and those who love a game with style - Devil May Cry, Jet Set Radio, Rez, that sort of thing. It should be said, though, that the only 'casual' gamer to whom I've showed P.N.03 played it for five hours straight and loved it, and only stopped because his girlfriend felt ill (and not at all neglected).



Bangai-O

Tim Miller is prepared to live in the plain and die in the plain

How do you measure whether a shmup is any good? How mentally tired you are after an hour of playing it? How many continues you have to use to pass the third level? How many bullets are on screen at one time?

If it's the latter, you'll be wanting a Treasure game. Ikaruga is giving Gamecube owners a good indication of what it's like to have loads of objects to avoid at a time - Bangai-O, however, has more. Bullets fly at you from all directions, and you shoot back - with a special attack, up to 400 missiles at a time. The screen is full of tiny sprites, and it's only by giving the game your full attention that you'll get anywhere.

The basics of the game are very, er, basic. You must get from the start to the end of a level, and defeat the boss, without dying. As you progress, you destroy enemies and scenery, all of which leave behind fruit which you collect for points. In addition, for each explosion on the screen, your power meter grows - the more explosions at a time, the faster the meter increases. Once the meter's full, you can unleash a special attack - and you can store up to five of these for those slightly tricky situations.

You have two main weapons - missiles which home into anything destroyable, and lasers which bounce off walls about five times each. Special attacks are the same as these, but with projectiles flying out in all directions. The more danger you're in, the more bullets flying towards you, the closer you are to the boss, the more you'll fire. The trick is to wait until you're about to be hit, and then launch a 400 MAX.



It's frantic, but there's plenty of room for strategy over how to use your attacks and move around the levels.

Presentation's very quirky indeed. The two formats are all but identical, with the Dreamcast's extra power giving the graphics a bit more sheen. All the sprites are tiny though, and sound's not memorable either. The translation of in-game text has been (possibly intentionally) done by someone whose grasp of English is minimal. It's the gameplay that makes this game what it is.



The screen's full of explosions, the only way to the end is to kill everything. What more do you need to know? The beautiful world of 2D! The tension is getting good! Three cheers for Bangai-O!

5/5

ugvm

Gold Award





Fear Effect 2

Anthony Dick dons the brown underwear

When a game opens with a cutscene of its heroine spewing blood from every pore of her skin, then turning into a demon and butchering everyone else in the room, you know you're in for a gruesome ride. Fear Effect 2 is Kronos's 2001 PS1 sequel to Fear Effect. Those who played the original game will be pleased to know that two of its major flaws have been fixed - you can switch between camera and character centred controls, and loading a saved game after dying is now almost instant.

In most other ways, Fear Effect 2 is very similar to its predecessor. The first thing you notice on starting the game is its distinctive visual style, with stylized characters overlaid on MPEG animated backgrounds. The overall effect is very cinematic, especially during the many polished cutscenes through which the plot unfolds.

Speaking of plot, Fear Effect 2 takes place before the events of Fear Effect, and features an entertaining mix of DNA, Chinese mythology, and zombies. You follow its various threads as you are

shuttled between the 4 main characters of the game, Hana, Rain, Deke and Glas, all of whom are dodgy mercenaries. Switching characters occurs frequently and varies the pace of the game nicely; for instance, Rain is more puzzle-oriented, whereas Deke and Glas have big guns.

Gameplay owes quite a bit to the Resident Evil games, with a mixture of auto-aimed gunplay, stealth and gloriously incongruous puzzles. The limitations of the fixed camera can make it difficult to judge where your guy is standing in the heat of battle, meaning you may end up jammed into a corner, facing the wrong way or shooting at enemies you can't see. Death is commonplace, but fortunately reloading is pretty painless and save points are generously distributed.

Inventory access is slickly managed without pausing the game. You may well curse this initially, but once used to it you can retrieve items or change weapons without breaking stride. Health is measured by a "fear meter" (i.e. heartbeat): mess up or get wounded, and you feel more anxious, so your heart rate increases. Do something cool, like a stealth kill or beating a boss, and your heart rate decreases again as your confidence rises. If your heart rate gets too high, you die.

Fear Effect 2 features buckets of blood and gore, but because of its glossy style it's not as grueling as other, more realistic games. It may not deliver on the lesbian shenanigans promised in its advertising campaign, but this is still a sexy game: it's smart, lively and looks great.



4/5 **ugvm**
Silver Award



Grand Theft Auto Vice City

deKay finds himself some guns, whores, drink and drugs. All in the name of **ugvm** research. Honest, Ossifer...

Are you the kind of person who likes to blow things up? Perhaps you like to stab people with a screwdriver, or bail out of a helicopter whilst it flies over someone's garden. Maybe you're the sort of individual who enjoys bludgeoning innocent bystanders to death with a golf club, or leaping over a river on a high-powered motorcycle. If any of these things are your "bag", then Vice City could be the place for you.



Improving on GTA III in numerous ways, Vice City is the latest in the series, and the most fun to play. Many were saddened to see that some of the best bits of the top-down GTA games were removed from GTA III, such as the motorcycles. Vice City not only puts the bikes back in, but adds helicopters, speedboats and golf carts too. If it has wheels (or rotors), you can generally nick it. And drive it. And crash it. And bail out of it at any point. The addition of a "bail" button to the game now means that some nifty stunts are possible, including aiming your car at a bunch of pedestrians, flooring it, and jumping out at the last possible second. Alternatively, jump over a building, and bail to land on the roof. Not that you often need to use this feature, but it adds to the fun.

In fact, there are loads of features in Vice City that have no purpose other than to make it more fun to play. For example, you can perform wheelies and stoppies on the bikes. The game even records your longest attempt. There are points in the game where, with a suitable vehicle, you can pull off a "unique stunt" - usually an impressive leap over a building or wall. You get a bit of cash for doing it, but it is the fun which is more important. In one area of

the map, there is a dirtbike track, which you can race around. There are remote-controlled car and helicopter challenges to complete too, and even vigilante missions where you steal a police car and drive down some crims. And should you ever get bored of all these things, you could always follow the plot and play the game properly. That's right - there is actually a game with a plot as well! What a bonus!

The game opens in the 1980s with your character Tommy being double-crossed and missing out on a huge drugs deal. With no cash to take back to your boss, it is up to you to stay in Vice City and make the money back some other way. In GTA tradition, money is earned by running "errands" for the dodgy folks who inhabit the city. These range from escorting a lady to a nightclub, to being a sniper at a deal, to running some guy off the road. You might be asked to steal a vehicle for someone, or find out where someone lives and dispose of him. Quietly. All the while, clues as to who double-crossed you are found, and the plot twists and turns, brushing you up against both sides of the law, and those corrupt types above it.

Although you must complete these missions to progress, most of the time you have a choice of several missions to attempt. You have to do them all eventually, but it does mean you can leave a harder one until later and have a go at another in the meantime. This helps the game lose its feel of linearity, and you always seem to have plenty of freedom to go off and do what you want. Fed up of trying to race your boat in one mission? Go and kill a few cops instead. Or try and get onto the roof of the shopping centre on your Faggio moped. Or steal a taxi, and pick up some fares while you're in it. There is so much to do, and plenty to see. Why not go into the nightclub, and see the Village People on stage? Cause a ruckus in there, and you'll find out the policeman dancing, is actually a real cop. Hover your helicopter in front of one of the skyscrapers as the in-game clock hits 11pm, and look at the pattern the lights in the windows make. Fantastic.

Graphically, the game is absolutely stunning, especially when compared to the weaker looking GTA III. As the day progresses, so do the graphics. In the morning, when the sun is low in the sky, the glare is



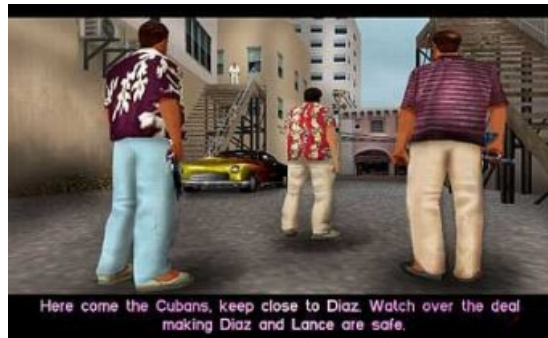
right in your eyes making driving difficult. At night, the moonlight tints the city. The weather changes too, with rain sticking to the "camera". The city itself is amazing, with the 80s style working well. Garish neon fronts the hotels and clubs. Miami Vice-style suits and haircuts add authenticity. The game's sound enforces this even further, with multiple radio stations playing 80s hits ranging from Billie Jean to Video Killed the Radio Star. DJs (including GTA III's Lazlo) fill the gaps between tracks with humorous jokes, links, and plenty of anti-Cuban, and anti-Communist satire. There are even adverts for items such as the Degenetrion - an Atari 2600-alike machine. Rockstar have obviously worked overtime in creating a believable city set in the 1980s, and it has paid off.

Have I mentioned that you can hold up shops yet? Or nick a pizza delivery bike and deliver some pizzas? Or buy buildings and stash cars in the garages? Or club people to death with a hammer? Or that you can run paramedic missions in an ambulance? Or that as an aside you can try and find all 100 hidden packages in the game?

So you now have the idea that this game is good, and that there is plenty to keep you occupied and amused (I have sat and listened to one of the radio stations for an hour before now). Surely there must be something to gripe about? Well, yes, there is. The main problem, which actually affects the game, is to do with the controls. In a car, they're great responsive, accurate and intuitive. On foot, that isn't



Review



the case at all. It is difficult to manually aim a weapon, or walk slowly, or turn easily. This can be fatal, especially when you are trying to get on or off a boat, as it is all too easy to suddenly lurch 45 degrees in the wrong direction and end up in the sea. Something else about the controls is how they change between in and out of vehicles. For example, to look behind you when in a car, you press the "look left" and "look right" L and R buttons together. To do the same when running, you press the R3 button. It is counter-intuitive and can cause you to change weapon or direction accidentally.

Another problem with the games is the loading time. It takes *ages* to load, longer than any game I've played since games came on cassette tape. Rockstar seem to realise this, because part of the intro sequence is a fake C64 screen loading the game. Thankfully, once you are actually playing the game, there is very little loading. Swapping between the West and East islands causes a brief pause, but that is tolerable. It can also be seen that the limited memory of the PS2 prevents too many vehicle models being loaded at any one time. Steal a car, and it seems that one in three cars on the road are then the same model as your own, with only three or four models at any one time.

The final problem also lies in one of its strengths. There is so much to do, you get easily sidetracked from the main aim of the game. It is far too simple to spend an hour doing stoppies instead of gunning down some bloke on a bike like you're supposed to. Of course, if you can resist the urge to "collect" 20 vehicles, pile them into each other and then blow them up from afar, and can prevent yourself from trying to take cars where cars shouldn't go (like I do), then you have more willpower than this humble reviewer. You might be missing out on some of the great bits of Vice City, however.

GTA: Vice City is easily one of the best games for the PS2. If you have a PS2, and don't own it then you either already have the (slightly better) PC version, or you're an idiot.

5/5

ugvm

Gold Award



Retroviolent

Think GTA was the first proper violent game? Think again, says **deKay**.

1996: Night Trap (Sega MegaCD)

This game hit the headlines in all the UK newspapers on its release. MPs forced a film classification of 15 to be placed on it. Religious groups said it was evil. And all because of its violence. Or rather, the violence that it was reported to have, but doesn't actually exist within the game.

In case you are unaware of this 'gem', the plot goes something like this: Nubile young ladies who are invited for sleepovers at a family's house have been disappearing. The rumour is that they are being taken and drained of blood for alien beverages. A group of special agents (including one woman undercover as one of the invited girls) and yourself are there to figure out what is going on, and to stop it. Through some contrived plot mechanism, you have control over the house's CCTV system, as well as traps in each room. When the aliens appear, and step on a trap, you trigger it, and they're caught.

The violence comes about when you fail to trap the aliens, as they can grab one of the girls and drag them off somewhere. You don't see any fighting, killing, maiming, or gunfire. Really violent then! One scene, which was supposed to be the worst in the game, involves one of the girls applying make-up or something in the bathroom in her nightdress. An alien pops out of the shower and seizes her, then hauls her off into a secret passage. "Sickeningly graphic!", said The Sun. Probably.



1992: Mortal Kombat (Arcade)

Sure, there had been fighting games before. Mortal Kombat was different. It had real actual actors really actually fighting. It had blood by the vat, and special moves that were horribly, horribly violent. Each punch caused spurts of claret to burst from the fighters. It looked far more realistic than Street Fighter II did, and felt more like a film than a videogame.

Worse than all that, were the finishing moves. Once you'd drained all of your opponent's energy, the words FINISH HIM would flash up on the screen. You could then pull off a special finishing move, which killed them for good. One of the fighters (Liu Kang) turned into a dragon, and bit his opponent's head off. Sub-Zero ripped his foe's spine out. Kano thrust his hand into the other fighter's chest and pulled out their still-beating heart. It was ace.

Sadly, The Moral Council leapt on it, and the media had a field day with it. "Graphically sickening!", said The Sun. Probably.



1987: Jack the Ripper (Spectrum)

"But it's a text adventure!", I hear you cry! That may be true, and although there are some (very blocky) pictures of corpses in some versions of the game, you have to read the descriptions to see how violent it really is. It didn't get a BBFC Certificate 18 for nothing, you know.

The story follows you, as the prime candidate to be the notorious Jack the Ripper, trying to not only escape from the police who are out to arrest you but also trying to prove your innocence. Naturally, your path crosses with the real ripper, and some of his victims, and it is on these occasions that the text becomes very graphic. It does make you wonder, however, how a text adventure can get a BBFC rating because of its violence, but a book does not.

frozen with terror and then the yet more loathsome truth dawned upon me. This was no mouth but a ghastly gash - or rather two gashes, the first reaching from under the left ear to the centre of the throat, accompanied along half its length by a second which reached round under the other ear, leaving a wide and horrible hole and almost severing the head from the body. Instinctively I drew back, putting out a hand for support upon the body itself. To my horror and disgust I touched not solid flesh but a loathsome cold and slimy mass into which I sunk up to the wrist. My eyes now quite acclimatised, I saw that the whole of the stomach had been laid wide open and my hand

more

1968: Pong (Standalone)

In its day, Pong was probably the most violent videogame around. Although, to be fair, it was probably the *only* videogame around.

Retro Review

PC

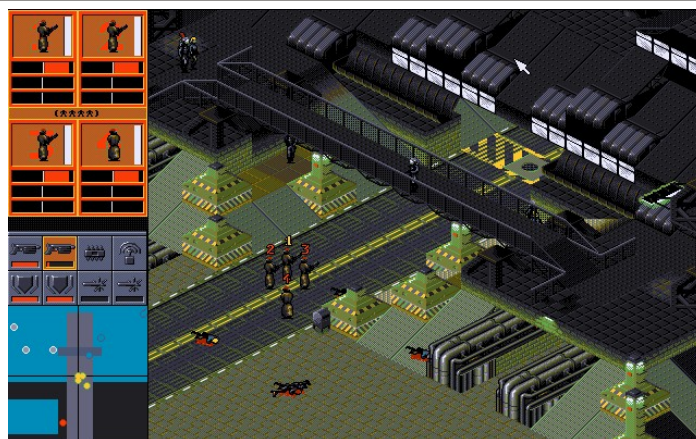
OJLim tries to get the **ugvm** staff to pay him a quid each a week for the Lottery

Roam freely around large cities, shoot lots of civilians, steal cars. Before GTA was a multi-million dream for Rockstar, Bullfrog already had the blueprint for success in Syndicate. But instead of basing the game around modern-day (or in the case of Vice City, the 1980s) Mafia, Syndicate set itself in a Blade Runner-esque future where you found yourself as the head of a one of many evil corporations trying to take control of the world.

Syndicate is a mission-based game where you are presented with a task to complete (assassination, kidnapping). How you complete the task is completely up to you and here lies the joy of the game. Four cyborgs under your complete control roam around at your every wish and command (*gasp* it's a GOD GAME in disguise!). Let them move together or have them walking in four-completely different directions to achieve your goal. You are in complete control, viewing the map in a classic Peter Molyneux third-person view, explained by the fact that you are traveling in a blimp high above the city.

Money is involved in the game, with budgets to balance. Gaining control of countries would bring in more income from taxes which can then be spent on buying/researching new weapons or improved body parts for your cyborgs. Set your taxes too high, and countries may revolt against you, forcing you to replay certain missions again.

The game itself has aged well. The cyberpunk



Syndicate

inspired graphics are effective, if slightly too brownish. There is a high level of interaction with the scenery, where you can happily destroy trees, dustbins and cars, should you so desire. The sound effects are excellent; listen to the meaty sound of the guns as you fire away. The music is decent moody ambient electronica, however is slightly repetitive due to the fact there are only two pieces of music to hear.

The variety of missions is excellent, and the combination of action/strategy/management ensures that you'll be suitably absorbed for a quite a while. Plus, lots and lots of blood and dead bodies.





Creatures

Creatures was the one game I knew I had to have. I had enjoyed the 'Diary of a Game' feature for months in Zzap!64. I had read the words of its creators - the Rowlands Brothers - describing their vision of the perfect platformer, released by Thalamus. I had seen screenshots of the double-pike-with-half-twist gymnastics that they had made the C64 perform, to wonderful effect. But the reason I was most excited was the demo tape of one of the 'boss' levels, involving a timbermill cutting saw, the lead character's best friend tied to a treadmill, a large 'acme 10 ton' weight, and a big green gloopy monster blowing fire.

Creatures (an acronym for Clyde Radcliffe Exterminates All The Unfriendly Repulsive Earth-ridden Slime, go with it, okay?) was a simple concept - a left to right scrolling platformer with a boss stage at the end of each level. But it just looked so beautiful. In the days of Atari and Amiga, here was a game for an 'inferior' machine, where the sprites had shading, and moved smoothly around the screen with a control system that was accurate and responsive. The backdrops and levels were similarly yummy. Sadly, the levels were a samey affair after a while, but the boss stages were where the game came alive. And here came the violence!

The concept was simple. You were given a limited time to help Clyde free his pal from a painful and bloody doom. Each boss stage required careful timing, thought and imagination. Not to mention the ability to go like the proverbial clappers! The layout

Kieron Hyams reminisces about his chum Clyde Radcliffe, and gets all misty-eyed and bloody-fingered...

was a sublime blend of the range of 'Acme' inventions of the Wile E Coyote kind. The learning curve was perfect, each time you'd get a little bit further, and coming back for more was not an option for all but the strong-willed. You knew what you were supposed to do, it was just making it happen that was the tricky bit.

Overall, the game suffers from the repetitive nature of its genre. It looked great, but the basic level gameplay was average to begin with, and quite frustrating in places. It did very well out of the Zzap! article, and was well received at a time when the C64 had just begun its nose-dive into oblivion. But the boss screens really set this game apart from the crowd, and reserved a place for 1990 in my heart.

3/5



Player Your Carts Right

"Turn your Gamecube into a SNES! Almost! How ace is that?" asks **Tim Miller**

Nintendo aren't going online yet. After E3's showing, Nintendo are trying to aim for a completely different area - connectivity.

Many of you will have a Game Boy Advance, or a GBA SP. Many of you will have a Gamecube. For those that have both, an increasing number of games are allowing you to connect the GBA to the GC and use the handheld as an extra screen, and extra controller, or to unlock new game sections. The Legend of Zelda: the Wind Waker allows a second player to play on the GBA, using it as an overhead display to uncover secrets that a single player might have trouble finding. Metroid Prime includes the first NES Metroid game for those who connect a GBA and a completed Metroid Fusion cartridge. Splinter Cell includes a new weapon exclusive to the Gamecube version. Animal Crossing includes a new island only accessible on the GBA.

Nintendo's focus currently seems to be on connectivity and convergence. E3 played host to the unveiling of a number of games which will use GBAs connected to the Gamecube - Pacman, Tetra's Trackers, and so on. This is a cunning strategy, given how many GBAs have been sold - if Nintendo can sell Gamecubes to those who owe their handheld, they'll be in a very strong position indeed.

A sidestep to this connectivity is the Game Boy Player. Essentially, the GBP allows GBA owners to play their favourite handheld games on a TV screen via their Gamecube, not having to worry about battery life or (in the case of the original GBA) sitting with their back to the window. It's not a massive jump in technology, it's not even massively useful, but it's being sold cheap (£40) and there's a number of innovations which it could make possible.



Work It

So, how does the GBP work? To start with, you have to screw it onto the bottom of your Gamecube, connecting it to the high-speed port (your modem or BBA can remain plugged in). Then insert the bootdisc into the Gamecube, your game into the slot at the bottom, and switch on.

With Gameboy Advance games, you're immediately greeted with a Gamecube startup screen, then (following a 50/60Hz option screen) the multicoloured bouncing Gameboy logo. Gameboy and Gameboy Colour

games have their respective logos at the end instead. The Gameboy Player treats the older games in exactly the same way as a GBA does - unfortunately, this means that the Super Gameboy-enhanced games are treated as normal Gameboy games, without enhanced palettes.

The screen initially has a large border around the edge, showing the surround to a GBASP screen. This border can be shrunk (so the game is almost full screen), and the colour changed. Again, the Super Gameboy-enhanced games don't show their custom border.

There are a number of other

superficial options that can be accessed by pressing the Z button on a Gamecube controller. The image can be made sharper or softer, although this applies more to movement than aliasing, and is used mainly to correct for games that use the GBA's display in unorthodox ways. The games are not noticeably blocky on the TV, although when in "full screen" mode the fact that they were designed for a lower resolution is more apparent. There's also a countdown timer, for seemingly no reason at all. And there's the useful ability to change your cartridge without turning the GC off and rebooting.

This latter feature is fun, if only for the fact that the eject slider on the GBP can make the cartridge shoot out at a fair rate of knots.



In terms of controlling, you can use either a standard GC pad, or your GBA (via a GC-GBA link cable). The latter seems quite pointless - you're using up your batteries anyway (the GBA must be turned on to function as a controller), so why not use a more comfy pad? The GC pad works very well, with buttons A and B operating the obvious, and the triggers acting as equivalents of the GBA's shoulder buttons. For directional movement, you can use either the d-pad, or the left analogue stick. The sensitivity of the stick has been set at a good level, so it's quite possible to be as accurate as needed using the stick - though some games may see you resort to the d-pad for quick movement. The select button is by default mapped to X and Y on the GC pad (however, for games such as Street Fighter 2, you're able to reconfigure so that X and Y take the place of the shoulder buttons, giving a much better button layout than on the standard GBA). Alternatively, you could fork out for the very nice SNES pad-shaped Hori controller, which is ideal for the job.

Is it worth it? It adds an overall sheen to many GBA games, and makes playing them in the comfort of your home a lot more enjoyable. It's not bad value for money, although including one of the older GBA games in the box (such as Kuru Kuru Kururin, for example) would have cost Nintendo very little. But if you've got both a GC and a GBA, you'll find the GBP a good addition to your setup.

GBPFAQ

I've got a purple Cube. Can I get a Purple GBP?

Yes... and no. Nintendo Europe have decided to alienate 70% of their Gamecube userbase by making the GBP only available in black - even if the packaging does show a platinum Gamecube. If you want a matching player, you'll have to import it from Japan or Australia, since the US is also only getting black. With a platinum Cube, the black GBP looks fairly nice. With a black Cube, it looks great. When stuck on the bottom of a purple Cube, it looks a little odd, contrasting against the control pad panel in an ugly way. And for those of you with spice Cubes ... import, honestly.

Can I use the GBP to connect to the Cube in games like

Animal Crossing or Zelda?

Nope. With the GBP comes a disc which must be inserted in the Gamecube for it to work. You can't have a Gamecube game playing at the same time. In any case, you'd need the GBP outputting to a separate screen. In theory, you could use a GBP connected to a second Gamecube to link up in the normal manner.

Can I use the Game Boy player to run GBA games in splitscreen for multiplayer?

Nope. The GBP only emulates one GBA. You can link up other handholds to the player to allow you to play multiplayer (one on the Gamecube, the others on their respective GBAs), but split screen isn't possible. Also, it might be worth nothing that the GBP

manual specifically says that multiple GBPs can't be connected together for multiplayer games.

Do I have to unplug my BBA to use the GBP?

Nope, the modem or BBA uses a different port on the bottom of the Gamecube.

Are there any games that won't run on the GBP?

Obviously, any games relying on motion-tilt sensors won't work. In addition, games with a built-in rumble pack (like Pokemon Pinball, or Perfect Dark) won't fit in the slot. The manual ominously says that some other games will have sound or vision problems, but we've not found any that do yet.

It's All About The Games



Advance Wars (GBA)

Reviewed in **ugvm01**, Advance Wars remains one of the best games available for the GBA. Addictive, clever and fun, you'll not put it down for weeks.



Wario Ware Inc (GBA)

A collection of over 200 5-second games may not sound like much, but it's addictive beyond belief.



Super Mario Advance 2: Super Mario World (GBA)

You'll think you're playing on a SNES, admittedly, but it's a great game.



Metroid Fusion (GBA)

Overlooked mainly because it came out around the same time as Metroid Prime, this is a great game that only just falls short of the excellence of its predecessor on the SNES.



Mario Kart: Super Circuit (GBA)

Better than the SNES original? Well, it contains all the SNES tracks as unlockable extras, so yes.



The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX (GBC)

Not Link to the Past? It's a close thing, but Link's Awakening feels as if it was made to be played on a handheld, while the SNES conversion feels slightly out of place on the train - it commands your attention!



Super Mario Bros Deluxe (GBC)

A conversion of the first SMB game from the NES, this one hasn't aged at all.



Pokemon Gold/Silver/Crystal (GBC)

Pokemon has far too many who deprecate it without ever having had played it. A far-reaching and innovative RPG, it will keep you addicted.

Future Developments

So, what for the future? Nintendo hasn't specified any plans for the GBP other than just as a console upgrade, but we think there could be more in it than that...

For a start, the recent Gamecube demo disc released in the US contained some demos you could download to your GBA or new handheld games. These were stored in the GBA's resident memory until it was turned off. What if there was a memory card that could hold the games even after the power was off? Such a cart could possibly be written from the GBP if a different boot disc was used.

Such a concept could be invaluable for games like Animal Crossing, where the extra island could be downloaded onto a GBA cart, and then cross-referenced while playing the Gamecube game.

Further updates to the GBP boot disc could lead to changes to the emulation of the Game Boy games. Want more Wario Ware games, or new maps on Advance Wars? Playing the GBA game through an emulator that added to the game's content would allow it. Nintendo could run a competition inviting the best Advance Wars maps, and then stick them all of a GBP disc.

And finally... Advance Wars Online? We needn't say more. Except:
<http://members.optushome.com.au/dancotter>

Seaman Diary (part 6)

This issue, **Rev. Owen Allaway** discusses politics with a talking fish. As you do.

Thursday Evening

My Frogmen are hungry when I visit the tank. I'm glad the moth cage is doing okay. Four larvae a day is quite a lot to produce. Once they're fed I find that Baron and Greenback have found something new to complain about. Oh joy. Apparently their skin dries out easily so I have to use a sprinkler to keep them wet. I'm tempted to point that there's a big pool of water on the other side of the tank, but I don't think it would do any good. I find the sprinkler on the D-Pad and start it up. I hear a strange noise, but nothing else seems to happen. I try again and notice that one of the rocks is wobbling slightly. I grab and pull it over and then the sprinkler starts working. It goes quickly and is actually quite fun to use. I keep playing with it while one of the Frogmen and I have a little chat.

Frogman tells me he's fascinated by how people change when they're in different situations. Do I think I change a lot, a little, or not much? As far as I'm concerned I change a little. I'm the same person, but different aspects of my personality are brought up or down in the mix. I think that's the same for just about everyone, except the real two-faced bastards you sometimes meet.

So I say, "A little." I get the '???' on the VMU and Frogman gets pissed off. I spend a few minutes tickling him and asking him questions and then he asks again. (By the way, always tickle your Seaman - it seems to cheer them up a bit and the responses change depending on what stage of life they're in.) I answer again. I get the '???' again. Another few minutes buttering Frogman up. I say it a third time.

And for the third time I get a '???' Sigh. I'm frustrated and when I get Frogman to ask me again I answer, "not at all." Guess what? Yep, '???' When he asks me again I realize we've been stuck on this question for the best part of half an hour. This time I answer, "a lot". And I get '!'. Thank you... Now I've got him to understand I feel a great sense of relief. But I still don't want to stick around any longer and I turn off the DC, turn on the PSX and play Chrono Cross for a few hours.



Later in the evening I go back to the tank. Frogman wants to know whether I think I'm in shape. In between fits of giggles I answer in the negative. Do I get enough exercise? Again, I tell him I don't. Do I eat healthily? I could answer this in the affirmative, but although I don't constantly stuff burgers down my throat I don't think I really have a great diet. So I answer no to that, too. Frogman is not impressed with me and tells me to go out and get some exercise. "Beat the system, eat a pound of broccoli." Sage advice from a creature that exists solely on a diet of moth larvae. He asks me what sport I like to play. Through clenched teeth, I tell him it's soccer. I so want to say football, but I know he'd assume I meant American Football. At least he acknowledges that it's the most popular sport in

the world. Other than that, he doesn't seem to know much about it.

Friday Morning

The Frogmen are hungry again. And I only have one larva. But I have two eggs and when I turn on the spray in the cage they both hatch. The newborns do not live long. Once he's fed, one of the Frogmen complains that I visit too early and then starts talking about sport, again. He asks me which professional sport I like to watch. I say soccer. "You and three-quarters of the rest of the world." After this he seems talked out, and I need to be at work, anyway.

Friday Evening

It's a quiet evening, with my Frogmen wanting to discuss politics and religion. I tell a Frogman that I'm a liberal, which he seems to equate with communist, given that he calls me a friend of the workers and asks me if I think there's going to be a workers' revolution. He also gives me a useful - if cynical - lesson in American politics. I tell him that I think voting's important, but that I'm not registered to vote. This apparent contradiction confuses him and his response is quite rude. I want to scream at him. "I am not registered to vote because I am a foreigner on a temporary visa! Do you see?". Of course, I could, but I don't think he'd understand. And I might blow up the mic. And make my neighbours might think that they're living near a madman. That's assuming they haven't already seen my talking to my TV, of course. In which case I pretty much rule out any barbeque invites.

More Next Issue!

My Top 5...

Blood and guts and explosions and more blood is all very well, but you need tools to make it happen. Vicious, unusual tools. **deKay** explains...

5 The Freeze Ray (Duke Nukem 3D)
Genius. With this fancy item, Duke can turn his enemies into ice statues, freezing them to the spot, and turning them blue in the process. Natuarally. That isn't all though, because with the power of his mighty feet he can kick them, shattering them into millions of tiny pieces.

4 Baraka's Blades (Mortal Kombat II)
Forget Wolverine, Baraka is the man when it comes to pointy things. He slices! He dices! Wipe clean and super-sharp, Baraka is a boon in the kitchen and lethal in Kombat.

3 The Screwdriver (GTA: Vice City)
What a versatile tool. With a screwdriver, you can not only put up shelves, take the VCR apart, and pick your teeth, you can also use it to stab people in the face. And kill them in a bloody manner.

2 The Proximity Mine (Goldeneye)
Of course, you can just stick a proximity mine on a wall, and wait for someone to walk into it can't you? But that is only half the fun. Why not find the multiplayer respawn points and drop one at each? Even better, use it in the same way as a sniper rifle and chuck one in your opponent's face.



1 The Crowbar (Half-Life)
No, silly reader. The crowbar is *not* for opening stuck doors, levering the lids off of crates, or even for smashing aliens in the face with. The crowbar is actually designed for panning that stupid bald scientist's head in. "Gordon! You made it!" clunk clunk SPLAT SPLAT "Gordon! What are you doing!?" SPLAT "Argh!" clunk clunk squelch clunk.



Letters

With your genial (or is that genital?) host, **Mr Angry**!

Enough Shades of Brown

Dear **ugvm**,

When's the next issue out? I've been waiting for ages! I was playing *Zelda: Wind Waker* last night, and was sailing on the sea, when a storm blew up. The clouds darkened, it started raining, and everything went dim. I couldn't see nearby islands, and had to look at the map to see what direction I had to head in. The game had lost its colour and vibrancy. This afternoon, I decided to play a bit of *Metal Gear Solid 2* on my PS2. It inspired me to look through the rest of my PS2 collection. With the exception of *Parappa 2*, there's nothing that's as brightly coloured and clear as the games on the Gamecube - and looking now I can see that none of my Gamecube games have the dullness or brownness that I associate with PS2 games. Is this where Nintendo went wrong - not enough shades of brown on their console?

Mark, via email

Hi Mark, and thanks for writing to **ugvm** - fortunately you managed to get your letter in before our deadline! (Oh, we have a deadline now? **Ed.**) We heard a rumour that Konami insisted on *MGS2* having dull colour schemes because otherwise it might give the incorrect impression that the game was remotely interesting. I tried playing that game for hours, if I'd wanted to watch bloody cutscenes I would have... no, I'm going to stay calm. Nintendo are redressing the balance in recent times however - look at the colour range of the Game Boy Player, we have *OOH BLACK!* And look at the dwindling Gamecube release schedule, that's pretty *FEATURELESS* as well! (And breathe.. No I'm fine, I can do this). **Mr Angry**

School Girl's Underwear

Dear **ugvm**,

I have a question that I hope you might be able to answer because you're the kind of magazine with the kind of insider knowledge yet also has a massive fanbase that should attract massive corporate sponsorship! You know - the kind that pays for bandwidth! Wouldn't that be great? If only there was an industry luminary with the kind of vision to take up such an opportunity! Anyway, I love all things Japan and wish I was Japanese. I can't afford to move there yet though so instead I'm trying to recreate the experience eating uncooked fish, trying to get on TV by enduring insane amounts of physical pain, collecting schoolgirl's underwear and living in a really tiny apartment. The problem is

though that I also bought an Xbox and not only is that very un-Japanese but I just don't have the room for it! Why did Microsoft make the machine so big?

Bernard, via email

Arigato Bernard-san! And welcome to **ugvm**. We should tell you know though that reading a magazine is also very un-Japanese as they no longer read for themselves - they either have a robot to read for them or just beam the words directly into the human brain! We don't actually know why Microsoft built such a big console, it's something that's got us stumped. You know, that was a pretty stupid thing to do. *IT'S NOT LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH OF OUR MONEY TO DESIGN SOMETHING DECENT, NOW IS IT BILL?* Uh sorry, I won't do this again. I get very precious about these things **Mr Angry** Erm, Tim? Is there a lock on his door? **Ed.**

Those Little Slots

Dear **ugvm**,

I'm having a few problems with getting my Playstation 2 online, which is odd because I'm not new at games. I mean, I had one of those grey Playstations for over a year and had every copy of *FIFA* there was! I don't have broadband yet but I know you can still use your normal phone, so I've unplugged that from the socket and tried to put it in those little slots at the front instead. What else would they be for anyway? The problem is though.. duh! It doesn't fit Sony! I managed to just pull some wires out and kind of force them in but I pick up my phone and I don't hear any other gamers playing. What am I doing wrong?

Ken, via email

Hi Ken and thanks for writing. I think it's fairly obvious to see where you're going wrong and while this kind of thing might normally annoy me, the editor and I have had a little talk so I'm going to try and help without any outbursts. Firstly, you do actually need broadband in Europe and a proper modem which... and a cable... no it's no good, you're a moron. I'd have to start with the basics for someone like you, for instance how to use a *FORK* and a *SPOON*. You know, simple items that even a *TRAINED CHIMP* COULD HANDLE. You probably can't even tie your own shoelaces, *YOU RETARD*. Oh and *FIFA*? Are you trying to *MAKE ME LAUGH*? Because that's only going to happen when I watch you suffer in a torture contest between the *Russian Mafia*, the *Triads* and five prison bitches to see how much pain you can be in without passing out while every girl you ever loved laughs at the appalling size of your shriveled genitalia. *ANYONE ELSE WANT TO COME AND RUIN MY DAY??* **Mr Angry**

Return To Sender

Dear **EDGE**...

NNNNNGGGGGGAAAAA AAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAARGH!! **Mr Angry**

ugvm

needs YOU!

ugvm is written by the you people out there in the big wide world. You do it for yourselves, you do. And that's what really hurts. Is that you do it for yourself. Just you and no-one else.

You can help us by providing. Providing articles. Reviews. Features. Comments. Letters. Suggestions. Not serving suggestions though. Some reader tried to email us "beans on **ugvm**" and that was messy. Although quite tasty.

The magazine is what you make it. If you send it in, we can edit it, print it, and sell nude pictures of you to internet porn sites. Well, that's what we do with Jim Taylor's pictures anyway. The whore*.

Here's what you do. Type up your submission, and send it to editor@ugvm.org.uk. Make sure it's all in plain text (so Notepad or Simpletext are good choices to type it into). Have a look at the review guidelines on the **ugvm** website (www.ugvm.org.uk) before you start, or the four horsemen of the apocalypse may be unleashed upon you and your loved ones.

All fairly obvious really. The only thing we ask, and this is a legal thing and so quite important, is that the work is your own, and you are not just cut-and-pasting some review or article from another website or magazine.

As always, we the **ugvm** staff can be found in the newsgroup uk.games.video.misc, so you're free to talk to us there.

Please give generously.

* if you wish to see the pictures of Jim Taylor tied up and naked, then send us a cheque for £10, and check yourself into your local mental hospital.

Hold The Back Page

If, like me, you are an obsessive videogame "collector", you'll have stacks and stacks of cartridges and discs piled up around your house. And possibly your friend's and family's houses too. And how many have you played? How many have you completed? How many, upon seeing a pretty picture on the box, or a bargain of an eBay-R@RE title in a shop, have you bought only to find out that it is complete pants?

It is like having "Pokémon Syndrome". You've gotta catch 'em all, regardless of whether or not you'll enjoy them, or even play them. After all, how many stamp collectors regularly peruse their collections and "ooh" and "aah" over them? I know of one person who collects mugs. Does he ever drink from them? Of course not. So why should I warrant every game purchase with a play?

Well, of course, I feel more guilty than Mr Mug Collector if I don't use my collection. And playing a videogame is more enjoyable than drinking tea. To me at least. But there has to be a balance if I were to play every game I buy to completion, I'd never eat or sleep and would have to blaze through each title in record time.

On the other hand, why should I play a game to completion if it's a chore to play? That's no fun, and

that's what gaming is supposed to be about.

Unless you're Microsoft, in which case it's all about money. But I digress.

These days, I play a game "enough". "Enough" is defined by several factors: "Am I still enjoying it?", "Have I got my money's worth?" and most importantly, "Is there something new out that I wish to play?". The latter of these questions applies to the problem I've had in recent months:

Got PS2 and Vice City. Played Vice City until Metroid Prime came out. Played that until Zelda came out. Played that until I got Phantasy Star Collection. Played that until I bought Burnout 2 for the Xbox. Played that until I got Tony Hawk's 4 in a sale, etc. etc. Of course, I fully intend to go back and play all these games to completion, but the temptation of "Oooh, new! Shiny!" is always there.

There are two solutions: Bin everything and collect stamps, or convince all games companies to release just one game a year, coordinated between them to arrive in four-weekly intervals. But who needs solutions? I *like* my problem!

deKay

Next Issue in ugvm

Keyboardless, pt2

Following on from ugvm05's feature on computers-that-became-consoles, we'll be taking a look at some newer machines, including the unfortunate tale of the Amiga CD32.

The "New Outrun"

So many games have been hyped to be the "New Outrun", and so many have failed to live up to that hype. **ugvm** reports.

Multiplayer Etiquette

Are you a "elbows on the table" kind of player? Do you need to know how to behave when visiting a friend for a gaming night? We can help - free of charge!

And More!

More features!

They're so super-secret, even we don't know what they are yet!

More reviews!

Of course, we need you to send us some first...

More Seaman!

Next issue will contain the final episode of the Seaman diary - don't miss it!

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